MAKING THE MOST OF CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT DOMAIN

by

MELISSA KEARNEY MARTINO

(Under the Direction of Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett)

ABSTRACT

Professional learning for teachers has become a staple in today's education continuous improvement system. Federal programs such as the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Program (RTTT), Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Elementary and Secondary Education Act and others have supported funds over the years to account for developing teachers' professional knowledge with the intended outcome being the development of high-quality classrooms and learning opportunities that equalize the playing field for all students. The RTTT program supported Georgia's Pre-K in using the observational tool Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to identify strengths and areas of growth in child outcomes. Quickly following the use of CLASS, Georgia's Pre-K began the implementation of the Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) training model to meet the professional learning needs of teachers. There is an abundance of empirical studies citing evidence for the use of CLASS and its effects on student growth socially, emotionally, and academically; however, there is limited research citing evidence for the use of CLASS' MMCI professional learning model and its effects on teachers' instructional support based on consultants' perspectives. The

purpose of this study was to assess Georgia Pre-K consultants' perspectives on the role of the MMCI PD model on prekindergarten teachers' instructional support implementation in classrooms.

INDEX WORDS: CLASS, MMCI, Georgia's Pre-K, professional job-embedded learning

MAKING THE MOST OF CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT DOMAIN

by

MELISSA KEARNEY MARTINO

BS, Georgia College & State University, 1994

MEd, Georgia College & State University, 2000

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2020

MAKING THE MOST OF CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT DOMAIN

by

MELISSA KEARNEY MARTINO

Major Professor:	Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett
Committee:	Sally J. Zepeda
	Diane Bales

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
December 2020

DEDICATION

To my children, know you can accomplish whatever you choose!

“You have to go wholeheartedly into anything in order to achieve anything worth having.”

-- *Frank Lloyd Wright* --

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge my mother and father who have always believed in me. It was during my childhood this dream began to stir and you always nurtured it, never allowing me to think it was beyond my capabilities. The will and work ethic you instilled in me are what allowed me to accomplish this dream. Thank you and I love you both more than you know.

I also want to acknowledge the quiet sacrifices my children made so I could dream BIG! The countless nights of homework, weekends spent studying, missed games and events were always embraced with your support. I could not have done this without you. Thank you for your support and love throughout this journey.

Lastly, I want to thank my husband. Without him this dream would have remained, just that, a dream. The many times I sought out your guidance, asked for help at home along with caring for our children are what provided me the opportunity to take the next step. Your encouragement and unwavering faith in me have always calmed the storm within me. You are my safe place to fall. I love you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Early education is often advanced as a primary mechanism to close opportunity gaps for children and to solidify a firm foundation in the transition to formal schooling (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Goldhaber, 2019; Mead & Carey, 2011). Numerous resources have been expended on training, staff development, professional learning, coaches, and mentors, with hopes of finding a way to support teachers in their work with students (Isenberg et al., 2016; Rhodes & Huston, 2012; Schachter, 2015). A growing body of early childhood research has centered on the design of high-quality classrooms emphasizing teacher-child interactions/teacher-child relationships and the fostering of classroom climates to combat poor academic outcomes as well as ultimately reduce school dropout (Manning et al., 2019; NCATE, 2010). Enhancing early childhood classroom quality is a priority as state and national policies seek to improve education (ESSA, 2015, Whitebook & Ryan, 2011). Recent work on classroom quality, especially the instructional and social nature of interactions, has assisted in predicting the social and academic development of students from preschool through secondary school (Landry et al., 2009; Suchodoletz et al., 2014).

Decades of school reform policies link classroom quality with children's achievement; however, examining only one aspect of education to determine performance is a somewhat inefficient strategy especially for younger children

(Fowler, 2017; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2009). Quality is a much more complex construct. For example, in a study including 1,600 grade 3 and 5 classrooms, components of quality including classroom organization and emotional support were found to be more consistent across the day than were dimensions of Instructional Support (Hoglund et al., 2015). Such work has opened avenues of inquiry which have challenged researchers to study quality via process variables such as instructional and social interactions instead of merely examining product variables such as achievement. This inquiry was beginning to provide a far better picture of what was taking place in early childhood classrooms while still considering student achievement and teacher retention in the field (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Advocates have suggested to raise early childhood classroom quality and improve children's outcomes, a direct assessment of classroom quality with a focus on instructional strategies should be implemented (Matsumura et al., 2002; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2009). When considering the instructional support in classrooms, the mode in which teachers share information, provide feedback, as well as manage student behaviors and time, influences overall classroom quality (Stuhlman & Pianta, 2009). Yet, teachers continue to seek balance with the amount of instructional support and other mandates (Kim et al., 2018). Hoglund et al. (2015) found teachers who put too much focus on curricular goals tended to forget about positive interactions with students, began to feel overwhelmed, and became susceptible to experience teacher burnout. These outcomes could elicit

teachers' feeling overwhelmed leading to unintentionally prompting negative affect toward children.

School Climate

Many state education departments have recognized an essential component of high-quality classrooms and school improvement to be school climate. Both the Center for Disease Control and the Prevention and the Institute for Education Sciences have cited school connectedness, dropout prevention programs, and healthy relationships as crucial for environments to support students (Thapa et al., 2013). Using the operational definition from the National School Climate Council, Thapa and colleagues noted school climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

Both the effects of school climate and the conditions that gave rise to the climate are deeply interconnected, growing out of the shared experience of a dynamic ecological system. Relationships are an integral part of positive school climates. Developmental theories have posited interactions young children have with others, especially adults, as influential in children's learning and development (Mantzicopoulos & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2003); therefore, as more and more children are cared for in non-parental settings, teacher-child interactions are believed to be "the primary mechanisms by which children learn in classrooms" (Suchodoletz et. al, 2014). The thought was that teachers' interactions with students enhanced their behavioral and emotional engagement in

the classroom through supportive and positive interactions (Thapa et al., 2013). School climates were indirectly and directly related to interactions as teacher-student support was built through intentional engagement between the teacher and the student.

Teacher-Student Interactions

Indirectly related to school climate is the classroom emotional climate (CEC) as classrooms are a prime location for child and teacher interactions. Researchers noted teacher-student interactions foster positive student outcomes and that CEC was shaped by the quality of social and emotional interactions between children and teachers (Reyes et al., 2012). The Teaching Through Interactions Framework characterized high CEC as a classroom with (a) teachers who were sensitive to students' needs; (b) teacher-student relationships that were warm, caring, nurturing, and congenial; (c) teachers who took their students' perspectives into account; and (d) teachers who refrained from using sarcasm and harsh disciplinary practices (Reyes et al. 2012).

Students who were competent both in general and in their relationships with classmates were students who were more emotionally secured with their teachers (Howes et al., 1994). This research suggests teachers should provide environments where students feel safe and secure to interact not only with their teachers but also their peers. One of the most important characteristics of school relationships is how connected people are with one another (Thapa et al., 2013). It was the value and power of teacher-student interactions and their connection to academic and emotional growth that drove research on school climate and

teacher-student interactions with the hopes of growing high-quality classrooms and improving student achievement (Thapa et al., 2013). Safe environments can provide emotionally supportive and respectful interactions with a teacher allowing for and encouraging student discovery and inquiry without the fear of embarrassment; subsequently, this high emotional investment in learning is likely to lead to better academic outcomes (Pakarinen et al., 2017).

Research has reflected the importance of teacher-student interaction not only in its effects on academic growth but also its effects on transitioning into formal learning. For example, Hughes and Kwok (2006) noted supportive teachers aided children in managing social and academic challenges more competently and allowed children to focus on classroom learning activities. Hence, early supportive relationships motivated improved peer relatedness and a greater focus on learning, both of which predicted positive academic and social trajectories.

As children transition into the academic world it could be a stressful time for them. One protective function for young children might very well have been the attachment-type relationships formed with their caregivers as these positive relationships potentially provided an environment of perceived safety and external coping resources (Lisonbee et al., 2008). When looking at the effects on children's cortisol levels, a stress hormone, in relation to teacher-child relationships in child care programs it was discovered those relationships influenced the variability in children's hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) activity moderately supporting the hypothesis that positive teacher-child

relationships predicted decreases in cortisol during teacher-child interactions and across the day (Lisonbee et al., 2008). Young children who had a secure and close relationship with their teacher experienced less stress and were better prepared to cope with social and academic challenges in preschool and the early elementary grades (Hughes & Kwok, 2006).

Stressful situations do not plague all students beginning their academic careers, but they can impact students who are academically at-risk and students with behavioral concerns more deeply (Neuenschwander et al., 2017). Supportive teachers had an effect on students who were academically at-risk and their future accomplishments. These teachers also had the ability to motivate students' persistence in obtaining learning goals (Liew et al., 2010). Children with high negative reacting temperaments were supported in being redirected toward healthier outcomes by the implementation of individualized interventions with a focus on the teacher-child relationship (McCormic et al., 2014). Positive teacher-student relationships supported children who exhibited non-favorable behavior in the classroom by functioning as a protective factor which allowed them to form fairly positive relationships with their teachers (Buyse et al., 2008).

For teachers to serve as a protective support for their students the need for professional learning (PL) to improve the overall classroom environment should be available (Brown & Weber, 2016). Providing PL on how to engage with children experiencing dysregulation in nonreactive ways has been shown to eliminate the negative effects of continued conflictual relationships and its impact on academic trajectories for the children (Portilla et al., 2014). It was not

surprising to find that those children were the ones in most need of the positive, supportive relationships with teachers in hopes of encouraging their engagement with the educational realm.

Decker et al. (2007) went a step further and looked specifically at African American students who were behaviorally at-risk while also researching the teachers' and students' perspectives of their relationship with one another. The students revealed their desire to be closer to their teachers and it was ascertained the teacher-student relationship predicted social-emotional functioning and engagement outcomes (Decker et al., 2007). Students' time on task increased while behavior referrals decreased as the student-teacher relationship increased in a positive direction (Decker et al., 2007).

Teacher-student interactions along with quality preschool programs have been documented to demonstrate an effect on language development as well as attendance. Studies revealed students' language skills could be positively impacted by the quality of their preschool program (Logan et al., 2011). Time spent in the classroom was critical to that relationship. Children who were absent on a regular basis had gains which were lower than those with more consistent attendance. Logan et al. (2011) also discovered, "The most disadvantaged children showed the greatest language gains as a result of preschool attendance, these benefits were apparent only within the context of higher quality classrooms." (p. 472). These findings both revealed the importance of teacher-student interactions in reference to language gains and attendance and, more

importantly, the results for children of low socioeconomic backgrounds which in turn highlighted the importance of offering quality programs to all students.

Some argued the most important effect of teacher-student relationships and interactions was how they affected the quality of the classroom. A positive classroom emotional climate is directly related to high quality classrooms. Unless students perceived their social/emotional needs were being met within their classroom environment, very little growth took place as their primary focus was finding a safe place. Pianta (1997) understood the level of importance of teacher-student relationships and its importance beyond academics when he indicated school adjustments were comprised of and functioned as separate components such as emotion regulation, self-control, and interactive skills. Successful adaptation, academic growth, and socioemotional processes were directly related to classrooms high in quality. One way to get students more engaged in their learning was to provide a high classroom emotional climate (CEC) which considered students' perspectives, encouraged positive interactions, and provided confidence and the space for learning to take place (Reyes et al., 2012).

Kindergarten students who had a close student-teacher relationship tended to exhibit a positive outlook on school, were self-directed in their learning, and reflected academic readiness skills (Decker et al., 2007). Research continued to confirm the importance of effective school reform which consisted of healthy relationships; social, emotional, intellectual, and physical safety; as well as school connectedness and engagement (Thapa et al., 2013).

The idea of healthy relationships and school connectedness and engagement were results of students who had been exposed to positive relationships and interactions within a high-quality classroom guided by a teacher who understood the value of teacher-student relationships and teacher-student interactions. Researchers recognized the importance of a student's relationship with his/her first teacher and the effects that relationship had on developing healthy peer relationships. Howes et al. (1994) revealed findings similar to the explanation that emotional security with a first teacher provided a child with a positive orientation to the world of peer relationships, while at the same time the socialization experienced helped form the child's behaviors with peers. Teacher-student relationships proved to be essential in creating quality classrooms.

Assessments of classroom quality relied on features of the classroom such as children having adequate material, space large enough for play, as well as safety features. (La Paro et al., 2004). An important predictor of children's academic development from preschool through secondary school was classroom quality, specifically referring to the teacher-child interactions (Suchodoletz et al., 2014).

Classroom Assessment Scoring System

Based on much of the research found supporting teacher-student interactions teaching observations were growing in popularity. Mashburn et al., (2014) noted the value of observations when they identified the Race to the Top grant encouraging the use of teaching observations along with other measures of teacher performance. Understanding the importance of high-quality

environments and the popularity of observations Robert Pianta, Karen La Paro, and Bridget Hamre developed an observational instrument, Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), designed to assess classroom processes. The constructs of the CLASS scales were developed based on the vast research on teacher education, early educational environments, and research on observations with a focus on classroom dimensions related to student outcomes (La Paro et al., 2004). Over time, several CLASS instruments were developed to assess classrooms serving infants through twelfth grade with each supporting a certain age group.

The CLASS instrument also brought about the need for PL to support teachers in understanding the elements of CLASS. The goal was that once teachers understood components of CLASS teachers would, hopefully, transfer that newfound knowledge into the classroom. Pianta understood that two things needed to be in place for PL to be effective. The first concern was,

> …the training and support experiences offered to teachers must be proven effective for improving practice and student learning. Second, to implement a proven-effective model at a statewide or districtwide scale, it must be replicable and embedded in systems of incentives, management, and evaluation that enable high levels of participation and fidelity. (Pianta, 2011, p. 5)

Pianta (2011) also specified the valuable information gathered by the use of the CLASS framework, "…accountability-driven assessments of teacher quality, facilitation of professional learning, and development of theory about

how classrooms influence students in positive or negative ways" (p. 13). The Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at the University of Virginia worked to create a professional learning (PL) model that would support enhancing teacher-student interactions which, in turn, would support academic development. CASTL felt that if teachers could observe many effective teaching practices which supported academic growth in different classrooms then the behaviors observed could be the focus of PL (Pianta, 2011). The PL model created by CASTL was based on the CLASS instrument believing they would have met the first goal for effective PL, a model that works.

My Teaching Partner

CASTL believed teachers having a common language and lens for their practice was valuable insight into designing and evaluating a set of PL resources. In the late 1990s, the My Teaching Partner (MTP) system of PL was created with opportunities for teachers to observe effective teacher-student interactions; skilled training in identifying effective as well as ineffective instructional, linguistic, and social responses to students cues; and lastly, repeated opportunities for individualized feedback on and analysis of one's own interactions with students (Pianta, 2011). CASTL had focused on ensuring there was "…a direct path from inputs to teachers (PL) to teacher inputs to children (teacher-student interactions) to children's skill gains" (Pianta, 2011, p. 14).

The MTP PL model was tested in a randomized controlled trial with more than 240 state-funded pre-k teachers and,

> …in classrooms where 100 percent of the children were from economically disadvantaged families, there were remarkable differences in teachers' rates of change in sensitivity and responsiveness, and facilitating engagement and enthusiasm in learning. Teachers receiving coaching increased the quality of their interactions roughly 1.5 rating points on the CLASS scale. (Pianta, 2011, p. 17)

It was also noted that a boost of nine percentile points in achievement and the prevention of one course failure were the results of the MTP PL model.

> Pianta (2011) discussed the need of the skill for identifying behaviors, It was not sufficient for teachers to be able to gain knowledge about effective interactions; they need actual skills involving identification of effective interactions with a high degree of specificity in order to be most likely to transfer the coursework into real-life changes in their instructional practice. (p. 20)

The MTP course, in collaboration with colleges and universities, was taught in 14 three-hour sessions. Standardized manuals with PowerPoint presentations, videos, and written assignments were provided to each instructor. To ensure the instructors were teaching the course, according to plan as developed by CASTL, they were required to videotape themselves for evaluation by CASTL. After evaluating the MTP course, results indicated significant changes in teachers' understanding of skill targets for children's learning outcomes, teachers' understanding of teacher-child interactions were increased, being able to identify

interactive cues and behaviors was improved, and improvements were seen in instructional practices (Pianta, 2011). Pianta (2011) also felt,

> A major implication of this work is that teachers' effective practices in classrooms can be reliably observed using standardized protocols, predict student learning gains (even on state standard tests), and can be scaled up in very large systems (for example, Head Start's 50, 000 classrooms) using live observers and train-the-trainer models of web-based instruction and video scoring. (p. 23)

CASTL had now addressed the second concern, a proven-effective model at a statewide or districtwide scale could be implemented with high levels of participation and fidelity.

Making the Most of Classroom Interactions

The 14-week college-level course would later be adapted into Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI). "The main adaptations were made by Teachstone, an organization founded by the CLASS authors to train individuals on the use of the CLASS and to support implementation of the professional development models" (Earl et al., 2017, p. 59). The college course became a PL model that was taught to a cohort of teachers that met for 10 half-day sessions. The Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) would eventually adapt the MMCI PL model further, with the approval of Teachstone, into a model that would be delivered across five months consisting of one full day each month. "Each adaptation maintained the original content that had been previously evaluated…" (Early et al., 2017, p. 59).

Both the MTP PL and the MMCI PL were tested in Georgia's Pre-K classrooms. The results showed,

> MMCI, which used an in-person, cohort model to improve teacher-student interactions, was an effective means of increasing Emotional and Instructional Support in Georgia's Pre-K classrooms, compared with control-group teachers…teachers who took part in MMCI had greater knowledge of effective teacher-child interactions after participation than did their peers in the MTP or control groups and thought their professional development was more valuable than did their peers in the control group.

(Early et al., 2017, p. 67) Based on data from the research Pianta, DECAL, and CASTL obtained just what they set out to do in creating PL that would support teachers in improving teacher-child interactions.

Although, there is grounded research on the effectiveness of the MMCI PL model, less is known about PL for pre-kindergarten teachers supported with this model. There is an abundancy of empirical studies citing evidence for the use of CLASS and its effects on student growth both socially/emotionally and academically; however, there is very little research evidence for the use of CLASS' MMCI PL model and its effects on teachers' Instructional Support based on consultants' perspectives. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess Georgia Pre-K consultants' perspectives on the role of the MMCI PL model on prekindergarten teachers' Instructional Support in classrooms.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the importance of teacher-child relationships and their connection to quality classrooms, the professional learning (PL) of teachers is of utmost importance. Research has supported the importance of high-quality classrooms, teacher-child relationships, and teacher-child interactions and their contributions to academic and social-emotional growth. Teachers need to have a common language and lens with which to view intentional teacher-child interactions. When quality classrooms exist with intentional teacher-child interactions the achievement gap can begin to close. To address such concerns PL became more pressing; therefore, federal and state funds were put in place to support the PL needed.

Identifying quality classrooms became a key piece of improvement for school systems and CLASS became an important instrument utilized when observing those classes. Noting the increase for using CLASS, PL models began to be developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) supporting the instrument. Understanding teachers needed to work with a common understanding of high-quality classrooms and its link to teacher-student interactions CASTL developed PL models that would provide the foundational understanding needed to be successful. My Teaching Partner (MTP)

and Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) were developed to support a variety of settings.

MTP was created to support teachers while in the classroom with support from MTP coaches and MMCI was initially created as a college course; however, Georgia's Pre-K revised the model from a 14-week PL to a PL that was presented for five full days over a period of five months. The purpose of both models was to not only build a foundational understanding of CLASS but more importantly, improve teacher-student interactions and in turn increase student learning and development (Pianta, 2011).

CLASS

The CLASS instrument was built around three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support which are supported by a total of ten dimensions. Each dimension is rated on a Likert scale from 1 (low) to 7 (high) with a low range of 1-2, a middle range of 3 – 5, and a high range of 6 – 7. Suchodoletz et al. (2014) noted:

> Hamre et al. (2013) analyzed CLASS data from seven U.S. studies (4341 classrooms total) and compared the three-domain structure of the CLASS (i.e., Teaching Through Interaction framework) against a two-domain structure (i.e., Social and Instructional Support model) and a one-domain structure (i.e., Effective Teaching model). Confirmatory factor analysis indicated the three-domain structure best reflects the nature and quality of teacher-child interactions. (p. 510)

Using data from over 4,000 pre-school to fifth-grade classrooms, it was confirmed the proposed model was a superior fit to the one or two factor solutions (Hafen et al., 2014). The three-factor structure was also the best fitting model in a study completed by Sandilos et al. (2017). Six studies showed variability across the models; although, with latent variables and loadings that showed stability such as Quality of Feedback, Concept Development, and Language Modeling all loading together on one latent factor which was referred to the Instructional Support domain (Sandilos et al., 2017). Those same studies revealed Positive Climate and Teacher Sensitivity loaded onto Emotional Support while Productivity and Instructional Learning Formats loaded onto the Classroom Organization domain; therefore, stability was demonstrated in association between the dimensions and their domains across grades and classrooms (Sandilos et al., 2017).

Emotional Support

Emotional Support (ES) covers four dimensions which are positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for student perspectives. A positive climate is seen when teachers focus on relationships, positive affect, positive communication, and respect (Flower et al., 2016). "Positive climate reflects the emotional connection between the teacher and students and among students and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions" and a negative climate, "Reflects the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom; the frequency, quality, and intensity of the teacher and peer negativity are key to this scale" (Pianta et al., 2008, p. 23 & p.

28). A classroom would be indicative of a negative climate should the following interactions be observed: negative affect, punitive control, sarcasm and/or disrespect, and severe negativity.

A classroom led by a teacher who is aware, responsive, addresses problems, and provides student comfort is supportive of teacher sensitivity. "Teacher sensitivity encompasses the teacher's awareness of responsivity to students' academic and emotional needs; high levels of sensitivity facilitate students' ability to actively explore and learn because the teacher consistently provides comfort, reassurance, and encouragement" (Pianta et al., 2008, p. 32).

The last dimension for the ES domain is regard for student perspectives which, "Captures the degree to which the teachers' interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage student responsibility and autonomy" (Pianta et al., 2008, p. 38). A teacher who exhibits flexibility and student focus, supports autonomy and leadership in her students as well as student expression, and is not restrictive with student movement would be supportive of having regard for her students' perspectives.

Classroom Organization

Classroom Organization (CO) consists of the following three dimensions: behavior management, productivity, and instructional learning formats. "Behavior management encompasses the teachers' ability to provide clear behavioral expectations and use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior" (Pianta et al., 2008, p. 44). The classroom consistent with clear

behavior expectations is led by a teacher who is more proactive than reactive in behavior management and effectively redirects students' misbehavior. A well-managed class will also be made up of students whose behavior is more compliant than aggressive or defiant.

Productivity in a classroom can be seen when the teacher maximizes the learning time for students, establishes routines, supports brief transitions, and is always prepared for her lessons. Pianta et al., (2008) also explained "Productivity considers how well the teacher manages instructional time and routines and provides activities for students so that they have the opportunity to be involved in learning activities" (p. 49).

The last dimension within the CO domain pertains to instructional learning formats implemented by the teacher. A classroom led by a teacher who implements effective instructional learning formats is an effective facilitator who uses a variety of materials and modalities, maintains the students' interests, and clearly communicates the learning objectives. "Instructional learning formats focuses on the ways in which the teacher maximizes students' interest, engagement, and ability to learn from lessons and activities" (Pianta et al., 2008, p. 55).

Instructional Support

Instructional Support (IS) encompasses the final three dimensions: concept development, quality of feedback, and language modeling. Pianta et al., (2008) described, "Concept development measures the teacher's use of instructional discussions and activities to promote students' higher-order thinking skills and

cognition and the teacher's focus on understanding rather than rote instruction" (p. 62). The teacher that is supportive of analysis and reasoning, encourages creativeness, integrates previous knowledge with new concepts, and successfully makes connections to the real world would prove to be effective in the dimension of concept development.

Quality of feedback is the teacher's ability to scaffold students' learning, establish feedback loops, prompt thought processes, expand or clarify information, and provide encouragement and affirmation to the student. It was also specified by Pianta et al., (2008) "Quality of feedback assesses the degree to which the teacher provides feedback that expands learning and understanding and encourages continued participation" (p. 69).

The last dimension under the IS domain is language modeling. The teacher effective in language modeling has frequent conversations with her students as well as encourages her students to have conversations with one another, asks open-ended questions, repeats and extends students comments, implements self and parallel talk as well as advanced language. Pianta et al. (2008) noted, "Language modeling captures the quality and amount of the teacher's use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques" (p. 75).

Psychometrics

A teacher's behavioral interactions with students in the classroom when observed predicted student learning gains as long as the observations used standardized protocols and were systematically analyzed (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

Although Pianta and Hamre were co-developers of CLASS they realized the need for better psychometrics as they knew the efficiency and costs required close attention and scrupulous study. Other researchers understood there was a variety of instruments used for teacher observations yet the methods for conducting those observations varied which in turn affected the reliability and validity of the scores (Mashburn et al., 2014). The Classroom Assessment Scoring System – Secondary (CLASS-S) was used in a study to examine the effects on reliability and validity when various procedures were utilized with the instrument and the study revealed notable differences (Mashburn et al., 2014).

Although some supervision instruments and standardized observations were developed with highly-regarded psychometric qualities researchers noted the importance of not losing focus on the purpose and relevance of the measure by getting so caught up in the technical precision of the observation (Swank et al., 1989). A difference was discovered when studying macro [teacher-to-group] measures and micro [teacher-to-student] measures revealing macro measures were better able to identify more effective teachers while micro measures did just the opposite by identifying less effective teachers. Both outcomes, however, fall short of the need to consider student outcomes in relation to the teacher's observation (Swank et al., 1989). Positive outcomes were found when studying the CLASS-S data from math and English language arts from fourth grade to eighth grade with consistent links between the overall composite of CLASS-S scores and student outcomes on achievement tests (Hafen et al., 2014).

International Studies

Although psychometric concerns continued to be declared studies suggested positive effects from the CLASS instrument in the United States as well internationally. The preschool and elementary schools' outcomes indicated positive results for behavioral engagement, standardized test for early literacy and normative tests for general academics (Casbergue et al., 2014). CLASS was found to have positive effects of teacher-student interactions serving Latinos and dual language learners (DLL) as research showed growth in not only social skills but language and literacy as well as math (Downer et al., 2012).

Internationally, a study completed in Germany found the standardized observational measure, CLASS Pre-K, for teacher-child interactions to have acceptable psychometric qualities suggesting the instrument could be used for evaluating quality preschool classrooms (Suchodoletz et al., 2014). A study in China, where collectivism was valued which was opposite of the Western culture where individualism was valued, revealed empirical findings which supported the three domains outlined in CLASS held across cultures and social context when viewing the quality of teacher-child interactions and when CLASS users were appropriately trained with a high level of reliability were found when rating the CLASS dimensions and domains (Hu et al., 2016, p. 18).

Federal and State Initiatives

Research clearly indicates the importance of teacher-student interactions and CLASS ratings and notes the best professional learning (PL) to support teachers in learning how to improve and expand upon teacher-student interactions

is still to be examined. Casbergue et al. (2014) expressed, "Researchers have become increasingly interested in identifying correlates of variability in effectiveness at the classroom level, leading to increased interest in identifying classroom characteristics that positively affect children's learning as well as effective models of professional development..." (p. 426). To this end, the U.S Department of Education invested $500 million in the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Program which gave schools the opportunity to provide individualized PL in hopes of expanding the Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) (Sabol et al., 2013). CLASS' measure of quality teacher-child interactions consistently was found to be the best predictor of student learning followed by the elements of the environment which were part of the five individual quality indicators (staff qualifications, staff-child ratio, family partnerships, learning environment, and interactions) found in the QRIS (Sabol et al., 2013).

The mandated use of CLASS by several federal agencies came about because of the consistent positive gains for children based on improvements in teachers' performance on the dimensions of classroom quality and interactions. The federally funded Head Start program implemented the use of CLASS, nationally, as a measure of each programs' effectiveness and more state-funded preschool programs are moving towards the use of CLASS as an evaluation instrument for their programs (Casbergue et al., 2014). The federally funded Head Start program (2018) began to use CLASS results as one of their seven

conditions to determine whether an agency would be subject to an open competition for the renewal of their grant:

(c) An agency has been determined during the relevant time period covered by the responsible HHS [Health and Human Services] official's review under §1304.15:

(1) After December 9, 2011, to have an average score across all classrooms observed below the following minimum thresholds of any of the three CLASS: Pre-K domains from the most recent CLASS: Pre-K observation:

(i) For the Emotional Support domain, the minimum threshold is 4;

(ii) For the Classroom Organization domain, the minimum threshold is 3;

(iii) For the Instructional Support domain, the minimum threshold is 2;

(2) After December 9, 2011, to have an average score across all classrooms observed that is in the lowest 10 percent of any of the three CLASS: Pre-K domains from the most recent CLASS: Pre-K observation among those currently being reviewed unless the average score across all classrooms observed for that CLASS: Pre-K domain is equal to or above the standard or excellence that demonstrates that the classroom interactions are above and exceptional level of quality. For all three domains, the "standard of excellence" is a 6.

CLASS as Professional Learning

The use of observation tools such as CLASS, "…can help create a common language for educators to talk about their teaching, fostering a shared vision of high-quality practice and common standards of professionalism" (Guernsey & Ochshorn, 2011, p. 2). Making a change to improve quality in classrooms required more than simply implementing the use of observational

tools. Guernsey and Ochshorn (2011) understood this new mindset and new funding to include trained observers and data collectors was vital if the observational tools were to be used successfully. Guernsey and Ochshorn (2011) also felt, "With the help of coaches and colleagues, teachers can customize strategies for improvement. And when used in formal evaluations, objective observation data can lend credibility to assessments of a teacher's ability to spur children to achieve" (p. 2).

Two PL models based on CLASS are known as My Teaching Partner (MTP) and Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI). MMCI, offered as an in-person cohort model was effective in improving Emotional and Instructional Support in Georgia's Pre-K classrooms when used to improve teacher-child interactions (Early et al., 2017). The teachers who participated in MMCI, in the end, had greater knowledge of effective teacher-child interactions than their peers who participated in the MTP training or their peers assigned to the control group. Although results from the research indicated teachers from the MMCI group had a greater knowledge of effective teacher-child interactions than those who participated in MTP, MTP teachers also made improvements in the Emotional Support domain. By the end of the study no differences were found in any of the domains between MTP teachers and MMCI teachers (Early et al., 2017) suggesting the important role of effective PL.

A study completed by Vartuli et al. (2014) researched whether using CLASS as a PL tool would make a difference in teacher instructional interactions. After the study was completed the authors affirmed, "Paired t-tests of the fall and

spring total CLASS scores revealed a meaningful improvement for participants in demonstrating effective pedagogy. Significant shifts between teacher fall and spring mean scores were found in two domains: Emotional Support and Instructional Support" (Vartuli et al., 2014, p. 5). Casbergue et al. (2014) implemented a study on CLASS reliability based on professional learning for preschool teachers and asserted,

> The results of this study indicate that use of the CLASS reliability training process for professional development is a promising and efficient approach to improving teachers' interactions with preschool children on indicators that have been demonstrated to enhance children's achievement. (p. 437)

Professional Learning

For decades, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) wrestled with creating professional learning (PL) that would sustain a positive change in student outcomes. Every year new studies were released comparing schools in the U.S. to schools in other countries with results suggesting students compete better internationally than in the U.S. Studies found a need was the PL that teachers experienced. The road to where we are today with PL has been long and arduous and we haven't reached the apex just yet (AACTE, 2018; Hirn et al., 2018; Vu et al., 2008).

The primary scorn of PL was its inability to address the learning challenges facing our schools. Without effective PL, improvements were not obtained, much less sustained. An empirical study was completed among 28

school-university partnerships and resulted in the development of the Structures of Training and Processes of Implementation (STPI) Model used to compare PL models. Models that were primarily based on an individual training were compared to PL models that were based on group trainings and short-term PL models were compared to PL models that were long and continuous (Sappington et al., 2012). Action researchers who used the STPI Model when analyzing schools' PL realized and "…insisted on the centrality of effective professional development that is needed to move schools forward as learning centered institutions with the organizational capacity for continuous improvement" (Sappington et al., 2012, p. 5).

Through the action researchers' process they recognized and created a School Development Continuum which consisted of four stages of school development: stuck, limited connections, transitional, and systemic. If a school is stuck then it was recognized as a school where PL did not match or align with the school improvement plan and because of such misalignment, training was often random and disconnected. For schools with limited connections, schools had the inability to sustain any connection between their PL and the school improvement plan. The inconsistency led teachers to label their training as the "flavor of the month".

Transitional schools are schools that are making headway in establishing connections between their school improvement plan and the PL available to their staff. The last stage of the School Development Continuum is the systemic stage where schools reach the goal of embedding both the PL and the school

improvement plan within the school culture supporting continuous growth. Regrettably, with 82% of the schools being stuck or limited, the U.S. remains in desperate need of reformation (Sappington et al. 2012).

Landry et al. (2009) noted, "there is a serious mismatch between the preparation of most early childhood educators and the preparation needed to optimize classroom practices" (p. 449). The search for restructuring PL to assist in closing the gap for student achievement can be overwhelming for schools across the nation. Change is needed; however, the type of change needed is still to be determined. Although limited research exists supporting traditional or reformed models of PL, there is still a need to create PL that supports addressing teaching strategies used in the classroom.

Reformed Professional Learning

PL continues to be the focus with the reforms in federal, state, and district level government mandates (Slavin, 2017). Research suggests "reform oriented" PL is more effective than "traditional" PL (Penuel et al., 2007). The restructuring of PL focused on subject matter standards, curriculum content, and pedagogy was predicted to increase student outcomes (Little, 1993). Such reforms called for teachers to competently integrate subject content as well as provide as many opportunities as possible for students to learn. This type of reform in PL was a divergence from the traditional practices that took place (Little, 1993). The developers of reformed PL recognized the need for more in-depth engagement than typically found in the standard workshop (Penuel et al., 2007).

The Reading Excellence Act (REA) which granted funds to support impoverished schools was established in 1999. Schools that received the REA grant used funds to provide reading coaches to support teachers' instruction of reading (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2000 noted the need for reading teachers who were knowledgeable about language and literacy and were willing to use scientific-based practices (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Language and Literacy continued to be the focus with the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002 which began the Reading First (RF) initiative and its requirement for literacy coaches which supported teachers implementing scientifically based reading curricula. "The use of coaches was suggested in the legislation as a viable way to provide sustained and effective professional development support to teachers in RF schools" (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009, p. 153).

REA, NCLB, and RF were not the only pieces of legislation that proposed the use of coaches to reform PL. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 warranted the use of instructional coaches in supporting teachers with the implementation of the response-to-intervention models (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Desimone and Pak also noted the importance of Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) which integrated coaches in their PL with a focus on meeting specific instructional needs of the school. To meet those needs coaches had to be trained on how to help teachers read and understand assessment results, implement differentiated instruction, and provide feedback on evaluated performance (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Mentoring was

outlined as a process to guide, support, and influence teachers in teaching practices (Landry et al., 2009). Landy et al., (2009) also understood

> With 'in-house' trainers who tailor the program to teachers' needs, higher levels of adult-child interactions and more positive child developmental outcomes are observed. An advantage of mentoring is its ability to individualize professional development to the needs of the learner… (p. 449)

A number of the reform initiatives opened the door for federal as well as presidential power which required states to sanction policy changes effecting charter schools, common core standards, teacher evaluations, and school turnarounds (McGuinn, 2016). President Clinton supported his predecessor, President George H.W. Bush, in believing in Standards Based Reforms. Standards Based Reform provided opportunities for states to receive grants where they volunteered to align their standards with test and accountability policies. Under President Clinton, the Improving Americas School Act (IASA) was established as a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which ensured learning goals and learning opportunities were the same for all including students enrolled in Title 1 schools. The IASA also required Title I schools to identify adequate yearly progress (AYP), originally introduced in the reauthorization of the ESEA of 1994, as well as what the plan of action would be to address areas of growth in those schools. Through the IASA, states and local educational agencies (LEA) were provided more power in making decisions for their Title I schools.

Not happy with the lack of progress with the IASA, President George W. Bush pushed State Departments of Education to focus more on test-based accountability which was the catalyst for the NCLB Act of 2001. The NCLB Act of 2001 took the power for making decisions out of the hands of state and LEAs and placed that power in the federal government's hands. The federal government provided prescribed action plans for any schools that received Title I federal funds. Along with the prescribed action plans came the requirement for annual testing of reading and math skills for all students attending grades 3-8 and one last time in high school. President George W. Bush set a lofty goal that all schools had to show improvement by the 2013/2014 academic year. Although, federally prescribed action plans were put in place, states identified what "proficient" looked like in their school systems which left the door open for subjectivity and the lack of alignment across states.

President Obama entered office in 2009 and many voters were certain he would abolish the NCLB Act of 2001 in support of state schools; however, that assumption was not realized. Obama chose to continue the requirement of annual testing as well as federal support to reform schools who had the poorest performance scores (McGuinn, 2016). With the help of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), $4.35 billion dollars was set aside for state incentive grants which were granted based on a competitive application process known as Race to The Top (RTTT) (McGuinn, 2016). Through the expenditure of RTTT grant funds with the help of President Obama and his staff highlighting problems in existing teacher-evaluation and tenure policies, the idea of reform

was in the crosshairs (McGuinn, 2016). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 was established to prohibit the federal government from having so much control.

Although federal control was reduced certain aspects from the NCLB remain in play such as annual testing and reporting of low performing schools; however, LEAs had more flexibility to select the test to be given in their school districts. Another strategy for providing LEAs more control allowed them to have more lead way in setting their own goals even though certain mandates required to support schools in outlining their accountability plan. No longer was state accountability and school improvements monitored by the federal government and rather than being stressed, optimism was on the rise in hopes of states and LEAs being provided more flexibility (McGuinn, 2016).

Sadly, each of these bills and/or acts used the term professional learning (PL) but did not explicitly define the term; therefore, school systems were left to create their own definitions where state and district entities defined, promoted reform, and funded PL. Critics noted teachers were placed in passive roles when attending workshops as they lacked continuity, content, and form and all in the face of teachers being asked to redesign how they taught (Little, 1993). PL was a term often used for training; however, it had many definitions depending upon who was using the term. PL often was group discussions of student work, one day workshops, co-teaching, teacher networks, mentoring, the use of coaches, and even reflecting on lesson plans. PL also included online courses teachers took to

increase their knowledge base of education. It was clear to see, there were many formats of PL; however, the question remained about PL effectiveness.

Job-Embedded Professional Learning

Research completed on training by B. Showers (1982) revealed, "…most of the skills and knowledge gained by teachers in in-service programs are never implemented in the classroom…" (p. 13). Showers saw the need for what was known as job-embedded professional learning (JEPL) which supported the implementation or transfer of new knowledge. PL was received in classrooms to support transfer of knowledge. In the 1970s, rates of transfer to practice were low, and the flaw was partially the result of educators' believing teachers would attend training, learn new strategies, and return to their classrooms implementing those strategies easily and effectively (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Research on the transfer of new knowledge and its integration into the teacher's daily routine of teaching exposed, "…without coaching of teachers as they attempt to integrate new teaching models into their instructional repertoires, transfer of training will not occur for most teachers" (Showers, 1982, p. 33).

Teachers were considered the "problem" for years without ever analyzing the structure of training. Showers and Joyce (1996) were concerned with ensuring students benefited when their teachers attended training; however, to do so, understanding how teachers learned and put those new strategies into practice had to be understood. Early in the 1980s, Showers and Joyce proposed providing weekly seminars to enable teachers to practice and to implement the content they learned. In other words, through JEPL, transfer of the knowledge gained in

training would more likely be seen in the classroom. Providing feedback along with practice under simulated conditions as well as modeling was thought to be a more productive type of training for PL (Showers & Joyce, 1996). It was also suggested for teachers to truly transfer new teaching methods, a teacher needed to receive feedback and support while applying a new teaching practice (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009).

Some researchers had moved beyond training for skill development and perceived the goal for teachers was to learn when to use the skills as well as to modify the new skills to the students whom they were teaching (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Although thoughtful ideas were presented; unfortunately, programs missed what proved to be an important component of PL, transfer. The transfer of new teaching skills and strategies was multifaceted as it required teachers to combine their existing repertoire of skills and knowledge and augment them with the new skills learned (Showers, 1982). Implementing the transfer of new skills into the learning environment required curriculum to be reviewed, goals to be aligned with new strategies, and skillful decision making implemented along with redirection of behavior until the new skill was operating effectively within activities in the classroom (Showers, 1982).

Effective Job-Embedded Professional Learning

Although recommendations supported by research were made, teachers continued to be offered traditional types of PL such as workshops away from the classroom, conferences, or trainings offered through one-shot PL. PL provided in this format consisted of a presenter who was the expert and whose job it was to

share expertise with the participants. The PL offered continued to miss critical components. Sappington et al. (2012) indicated PL was criticized by scholars in the field as inauthentic, unresponsive to students and their families, and communities, and was disconnected from teacher work. Little (1993) believed when adequate opportunities for practice were provided along with coaches to provide classroom consultation for teachers as they learned to use new strategies, then effective training was taking place. Little (1993) went on to say, "All in all, then, we might make some substantial gains in some arenas if we more uniformly and consistently made use of what we have learned about the organizations of training and classroom follow-up" (p. 5).

Although progress had been made in moving away from believing teachers, alone, could learn strategies and take them back to their classrooms for implementation, explicit information which defined JEPL processes to support transfer of learning was still missing. Some researchers believed JEPL was implemented in day-to-day teaching practices with the purpose of enhancing teacher's content-specific teaching practices. This in return, improved student learning and continued to provide support on site which ensured the involvement of teachers in assessing and finding solutions for problems of practice that arose (Croft et al., 2010). The NCLB Act defined PL as training that took place where activities that improved teaching practices were not only taught but were sustained and those activities aligned with state and academic content standards, assessments, and student academic achievement (Desimone, 2011).

A year earlier, scholars noted a lack of concrete examples for JEPL and it was suggested that the Race to the Top grant application, the School Improvement Fund regulations, and the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) guidelines all failed to provide concrete examples of PL (Croft et al., 2010). The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) explained the lack of an explanation for JEPL protocols. First, the DOE perceived PL needed to be JEPL which implied a connection between the PL a teacher received and her work in the classroom. Lastly, ongoing, high quality, JEPL to staff in a school improved instruction in multiple ways (Croft et al., 2010). Although the U.S. DOE addressed the lack of a clear explanation for what JEPL looked like, it still left a vague sense of what school systems needed to implement. The U.S. DOE had certainly taken a step forward by at least beginning to support the need for JEPL that was linked to what teachers did in their classrooms but there still was not any certainty on how that JEPL would be provided.

The educational system was abounding with confusion over the implementation of JEPL. Even back in 1993, Little asserted, "…much of what we anticipate in the present reforms does not lend itself to skill training, because it is not readily expressed in terms of specific, transferable skills and practices" (p. 5); therefore, schools are left to wrestle with what JEPL principles will look like in practice. After years of practice with successes and failures, JEPL began to become a little clearer. JEPL finally began to be the most powerful experiences for teachers as it centered on learning that took place in the classrooms as well as through self-examination (Desimone, 2011). JEPL required teachers to use the

professional knowledge gained from professional learning (PL) to support teachers in learning research-based practices which were found within the walls of their own schools (Croft et al., 2010).

A variety of job-embedded professional learning (JEPL) designs were identified, such as, mentoring, action research, coaching, the examination of students' works, peer observation, lesson study, and virtual coaching (Croft et al., 2010). However, for JEPL to be successful, programs needed to understand that although they were seeking to develop larger ideals they needed to account for the daily pressures of teaching and by doing so they were able to maintain their members as well as continued to attract new teachers into their lasting network (Lieberman, 2000). Without consideration of the daily pressures of teachers and giving voice to those pressures, teachers were likely to struggle taking on, what they might have perceived was, an additional task. When teachers worked together, effectively, it was found that teachers not only had a sense for each other's PL, but they also considered each other as professionals (Fitzgerald & Theilheimer, 2013).

This type of relationship created a support base for each teacher as they continued to grow in their profession. Typically, teachers who worked in close relationships usually understood the needs of each in their group and had the ability to communicate not only formally but informally which provided a team of common knowledge and mutual understanding. This type of working relationship was at the heart of effective JEPL. "Team work" had already been professed as an important trait for a successful JEPL, and it was believed the JEPL had the

ability to go further than the teachers within one hallway; rather, if implemented appropriately, it had the ability to provide effective development to all the teachers in a team or even a school which sparked conversations about concrete acts of teaching and student learning (Croft et al., 2010). Other researchers of JEPL were on the same track as they perceived a program that shared a common belief, provided opportunities for communication, and intentionally built relationships among staff that created a thriving environment for teamwork (Fitzgerald & Theilheimer, 2013).

The awareness of the many processes that included teachers working closely with one another and the success of those relationships, it went without being said that JEPL had to include the central component of staff interactions in its explicit definition. Informal and formal interactions among staff were a part of what contributed to JEPL placed within schools and classrooms (Croft et. al, 2010). Peer coaching was recognized as promoting communication among co-workers as well as increasing teacher professionalism. Those traits allowed teachers to exchange ideas, work collaboratively brainstorming ideas to solve problems, and to observe and reflect on their professional practice (Zepeda et al., 2013). A study on peer coaching by Showers (1984) helped her understand a coaching program would not only be supportive of professional and collegial relationships, but it also set schools up for improvements (Showers, 1984).

Many researchers agreed with Little's thoughts that meaningful, social, emotional, and even intellectual engagement with colleagues both in and out of teaching was provided by PL (Little, 1993) and when they promoted PL placed

within schools the PL was always about the school's current work (Croft et. al, 2010). It was also recommended schools created an environment where teachers worked together in peer coaching teams to achieve adequate skills that in turn affected student learning (Showers & Joyce, 1996). To create an environment where teachers had the needed organizational setting to support professional communities within schools only allowed for continuous learning (Lieberman, 2000). This type of JEPL supported Showers concept of transfer as it provided opportunities for a teacher's active participation and construction of professional knowledge within the school building and within the environment where the new-found professional knowledge needed to be implemented.

Incongruent Expectations

The 21st century and its reforms brought about the heightened attention on JEPL and its tie to coaching; however, coaching had already been introduced. Early in the 1980s, literature that supported training and studying the problem of transfer highlighted the need for training that went beyond a one-day session; suggesting training needed to be extended and advocated coaching (Showers, 1982). Well into the 19th century the coaching aspect of JEPL continued to be strongly advocated as a variety of educational researchers researched its need (Landry et al., 2009). The implementation of the coaching component in focused PL resulted in better teaching practices (Hamre et al., 2017) and the on-going nature of a coach's visits improved teacher and student learning (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

During this time, funding ensuring "coaches" continued to be a part of the PL warranted an improvement in not only teachers' repertoire of skills but student outcomes; however, once again, the field of education witnessed a process that created difficulties of its own – the rush to implement new policies. Rushing the implementation of new policies ended up undermining systemic change based on local and state leader's attempts to decrease the practical and conceptual complexities (Little, 1993). The rush, whether it was a good fit or not, was the result of a number of factors such as limited time frames set forth by state programs, the school boards' demand for results, or simply the need to spend funds prior to the end of the fiscal year (Little, 1993). As PL moved into 21st century educational programs, there was a rush to implement PL before solid theoretical models and job descriptions were well defined resulting in confusion surrounding the role and focus of coaching (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009).

By 2017, it had become well known that having improvement oriented, well-trained organized leaders who understood how to use data to drive their improvement process resulted in effective programs which used resources effectively based on data (Hamre et al., 2017). Regardless of understanding what yielded an effective program, educational systems failed to heed those results. Although coaching initiatives should have been geared towards training that supported teacher development of new instructional practices and improving student achievement there continued to be mixed results, and that was in part due to mixed expectations.

The variety of incongruent job descriptions involved a multitude of tasks which took coaches away from directly working with teachers on instruction (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018). Being asked to serve in managerial roles that involved staff supervision and evaluation responsibilities as well as assisting in managing instructional materials (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009) completely defied what Little (1993) identified as a key requirement for effective coaching, which was to maintain consistency of purpose and coordination. Mixed expectations did not only refer to the duties of the coach but the outcome of the intended JEPL. Reforms having a particular belief was common; however, what that principle looked like in action was not always included (Little, 1993) and without understanding how the principles look in action teachers usually became frustrated as they were doing what was, all the while, imagining what the reform could truly resemble (Little, 1993).

Another disservice to JEPL was believing the one size fits all motto created by bureaucracies overlooking the need to craft distinctions between the needs of experienced teachers and novice teachers (Lieberman, 2000). Once again, this thought process defied what Little (1993) believed to be imperative to effective PL and that was considering the contexts of teaching as well as the teacher's experience.

Providing opportunities for teachers to brainstorm new ideas relevant to their current circumstances and existing practices confronted the "one size fits all" model which typically consisted of standardized content regardless of ones' teaching setting, teaching expertise, or teaching experience (Little, 1993). Other

issues that reform faced, and at times continues to face, was missing the desire to implement an inquiry and problem-solving paradigm built around "knowledge production"; rather, what was implemented was a training built on "knowledge consumption" (Little, 1993) which ensured teachers obtained JEPL within the work day and within the work year.

Aligned Job-Embedded Professional Learning

Without distinct defining roles for what "coaching" as a form of job-embedded professional learning (JEPL) resembled educators continued to spin their wheels and continued to do what Showers (1984) detected, which was that trainers believed once skills were mastered, transfer would automatically take place. "We have, for the most part, had to rely on researchers who study the change process to discover that much of our training has disappeared at the point we most care about--the interaction between teachers and students" (Showers, 1984, p. 1). To prevent misaligned JEPL that potentially missed one of the most important aspects of professional learning (PL), interaction between teachers and students, an analysis of formative assessment on the students' and teachers' performance in relation to school needs had to be carried out to guide the development of goals aligned with the JEPL methods (Croft et. al, 2010). Without this type of analysis, effective JEPL continued to elude programs.

Showers and Joyce (1996) recognized the need to focus on JEPL being aligned with school goals as they hypothesized, "There is no evidence that simply organizing peer coaching or peer study teams will affect students' learning environments. The study of teaching and curriculum must be the focus" (p. 12).

Hamre et al., (2017) provided an exemplary example of the importance in aligning school goals with PL when they focused solely on preschool. She and her colleagues knew for the expansion of preschool to be successful the classrooms had to be implemented by teachers who had effective PL. Hamre et al., (2017) understood by evaluating the existing PL systems as well as the collaboration that took place between practitioners and researchers, they had to identify the leadership necessary to support and manage effective PL as well as how to create and carry out that PL. What started out as a hypothesis for Showers and Joyce (1996) was proven to be beneficial to teachers as the implementation of coaching sessions were on the rise.

Moving beyond the antiquated PL that assumed individual teachers took it upon themselves to learn new strategies and implement those strategies in the classrooms, Showers and Joyce (1996) completed research that revealed teachers who practiced new strategies as well as applied them appropriately were part of a coaching relationship which meant each person shared ideas of teaching and supported one another in planning. The teachers involved in the coaching sessions began to collaborate in such a successful manner they wanted to continue the process even after goals had been reached. The shift moved from weekly seminars supporting teachers in improving the implementation of what they learned in training to entire faculties forming peer coaching teams that allowed for the study of teaching on a continuous basis. The new recommendation of peer coaching teams within schools that provided an environment where the teachers

worked together gaining necessary skills that effected student learning was a success.

Little explained changing classroom practices to school-wide practices was a part of PL as her belief was that, "It is grounded in a 'big picture' perspective on the purposes and practices of schooling, providing teachers a means of seeing and acting upon the connections among students' experiences, teachers' classroom practice, and school-wide structures and cultures" (Little, 1993, p. 11). Staff members should have been provided the opportunity to learn together if the climate of the environment was supportive of PL (Fitzgerald & Theilheimer, 2013). No longer were the flaws of the 1950s and 1960s prevalent; rather, the coaching process was now a part of the training paradigm. No longer was the onus on each individual teacher to improve students' learning; rather, schools had begun to work together to form lasting relationships. The paradigm shift noted social organizations within the school, and this supported finding strategies that accomplished school goals and in turn supported advancement of student learning.

Four Principles of the Coaching Model

Showers and Joyce described peer coaching which focused on innovation and instruction. Showers and Joyce (1996) noted four principles in the coaching model: 1) to be a member of a peer coaching study team the teacher must agree; 2) omit verbal feedback as a coaching component; 3) redefine the meaning of 'coach'; and 4) peer coaching teams are more than simply observations and conferences. The first principle of agreeing to be on the team was imperative if

the participants had to buy into all the steps of the process and see those steps through completely. Showers and Joyce worked with entire faculties to support JEPL. Staff members worked together over a prolonged period to reach common goals, they created new strategies to implement in the classrooms, and they planned lessons and identified needed materials. Lieberman (2000) realized a great sense of power from the groups that worked together to improve their professional identity. The willingness of each member brought with it the desire to be better, to learn, to support one another and most of all it brought commitment!

The second principle to omit, the coach's responsibility to provide verbal feedback, was different from what most coaching positions required. Showers and Joyce instructed coaches to provide support which helped the teachers with planning and developing curriculum and instruction. Collaborative work was at risk when teachers provided feedback to one another because they felt they were placed in more of a managerial role. That feeling defeated one of the main purposes of JEPL which was to trust and collaborate. "Teachers shared with us that they expect "first the good news, and then the bad" because of past experiences with clinical supervision, and admitted they often pressured their coaches to go beyond technical feedback and give them 'the real scoop'" (Showers & Joyce, 1996, p. 15).

The requirement of omitting feedback led to the third principle which redefined the term "coach". Showers and Joyce (1996) revealed rather than the coach being the one to teach strategies, they learned from the individual observed.

The teacher in practice or being observed was now the coach. This completely differed from typical coaching situations where the "coach" or the observer had the knowledge. In this scenario, both shared knowledge but neither had the responsibility nor felt the pressure to provide feedback.

The last principle required much more than observations and conferences. The coach had to understand how each person on the team learned from one another. Understanding how the individuals learned was valuable because there was no one method that supported how all individuals acquired or used knowledge. "Keeping a balance between inside knowledge (the experiential knowledge of teachers) and outside knowledge (knowledge created by research and conceptualization) is a hallmark of successful collaboratives" (Lieberman, 2000, p. 223). Knowledge based on research, about how adults learned was to be used to inform the design of JEPL (Croft et. al, 2010). The coach was not the only base of expertise, rather there were many experts in the group, and each had something valuable to share. It was the team of peers that supported one another in reaching goals that were aligned with the school.

Structural Features of Professional Learning

Allowing for collaborative planning, decision making, and data collection, one essential component for change needed to be reviewed, the structure and content of training (Showers & Joyce, 1996). In the growing interest of reforming professional learning (PL), understanding the differences between the new PL and traditional PL was imperative and one of the structural features was the type of activity. Traditional forms of PL were workshops, institute courses and even

conferences. Those sorts of activities were all short term and typically took place out of the classroom. For reform activities to span a longer period of time as well as involve more contact hours, the type of activity was an important influence on duration (Garet et al., 2001). New PL reform activities took place during the regular school day and some happened within classroom instruction. Understanding the structure of new PL methods such as mentoring, teacher-study groups, and coaching allowed for a longer duration when compared to traditional PL which in turn supported on-going and continuous growth.

The duration of PL was another important structural feature for effective PL. "Time span and contact hours have a substantial positive influence on opportunities for active learning and coherence. Longer activities tend to include substantially more opportunities for active learning…" (Garet et al., 2001, p. 933). Calls for PL to be sustained over time for teacher learning and PL was recommended in most literature (Garet et al., 2001). PL that took place over a period of time allowed for deeper conversations and provided sufficient opportunities to practice new strategies and tweak them based on students' needs.

The third structural feature was the collective participation of teachers. This, what seemed like a minor detail, was very important. Teachers who felt they were assigned to trainings against their will, which covered topics they did not feel were important did not maintain any changes in behavior. Coaching alone did not accomplish the task of transfer of training when teachers did not choose to fully participate in the PL (Showers, 1984). Teachers who made their own decision on the type of PL maintained interest and eagerness to learn.

Another positive aspect of all teachers who agreed to participate in the PL was the allowance of open discussions, the sharing of ideas, assessing strategies, help to solve problems, as well as working together for the improvement of the students. Teachers simply had their own support base when there was collective participation.

The importance of working with a group of teachers from the school as a structural feature was imperative to further the reform of PL. Teachers who practiced new skills and strategies were those teachers who worked with their peers (Zepeda et al., 2013) and when teachers from the same school progressed through PL, they maintained changes in practice over time. Collective participation in the same PL opened the door for debate, improved understanding, and ultimately, increased the teachers' capacity to grow (Garet et al., 2001). A peer coaching program that was implemented within a school had a greater effect than simply mastering and integrating new skills and knowledge obtained by individual teachers (Showers, 1984). In agreement with Showers, schools accomplished any goal of improvement they chose if they had constant structures of collegial relationships. "Teacher interaction through collectively participating in PD is a powerful way to creating a productive learning environment" (Desimone & Pak, 2017, p. 7), and this learning environment was for the teachers involved in the PL.

Desimone (2011) talked about core features that must be included for effective PL: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation. Several of the core features overlapped or replicated what Showers

shared in her earlier research. One of the other three core features was content focus and it was centered around "subject matter content and how students learn that content" (Desimone, 2011). Desimone and Pak (2017) believe, "Coaching allows both coach and teacher to engage deeply in the subject-matter content of the lesson, whether the focus is on developing assignments, classroom pedagogical approaches, student understanding, or diagnostic assessment" (p. 5). A key to the success of PL ensured it was aligned with classroom curricula as research showed the lack of integration with curriculum limited PL program impacts (Hamre et al., 2017).

The next core feature, active learning, was when teachers were provided opportunities to get involved rather than simply listening to lectures via workshops (Desimone, 2011). Teachers had to be actively engaged when provided the opportunities to observe and provide feedback, create and make presentations, or analyze student work. Desimone and Pak (2017) noted, "A popular coaching method is to observe a lesson and then debrief with that teacher as soon as possible afterward" (p. 6). Coaching in this method even had the ability to be completed virtually when a teacher recorded himself teaching and then shared the tape with the coach. Desimone and Pak (2017) said, "These forms of interaction allow dynamic give and take, trial and error—in other words, active, not passive, forms of learning" (p. 6). Coaching also needed to be a continuum which required teachers to work on practices of choice (Desimone & Pak, 2017). JEPL was appropriate for adult learning when relevant to teachers and allowing them to construct their professional knowledge (Croft et al., 2010).

The last core feature was coherence meaning any professional learning (PL) provided needed to be aligned with teachers' beliefs, state reform policies, and other PL provided (Desimone, 2011). It was discovered through early childhood education PL literature, intentionally designed PL and high-quality PL helped teachers to change their strategies which helped children have greater outcomes (Hamre et al., 2017). A teacher's efforts to obtain teaching in a consistent direction was altered when teachers conflicted with any guidance provided on what to teach and how to teach the content (Garet et al., 2001). Desimone and Pak (2017) knew, "Instructional coaching provides coherence through the coaches' role in helping teachers navigate new instructional practices based on their prior held knowledge and beliefs about teaching" (p. 8). Teachers less likely to adopt/adapt any ideas provided in PL were teachers who did not believe pressures within the schools were aligned with district goals (Penuel et al., 2007). When teachers felt the PL supported them in meeting the demands of their school systems then they were more likely to put forth a more concerted effort.

The additional three core features covered had positive effects as they identified both structures of content and coherence had positive significant effects on enhanced knowledge and skills; thus, they supported other research findings suggesting activities focused on content, related to other PL encounters, and other reform efforts enhanced the teacher's knowledge and skills (Garet et al., 2001). Making sure not to leave out active learning, it was noted the positive effects it had on enhancing the knowledge and skills of teachers. State education agencies (SEA) worked to provide high-quality JEPL and one recommendation made was

to use a shared vocabulary in reference to the meaning of JEPL (Croft et al., 2010). Providing technical assistance was on the list of things to do in support of providing high-quality JEPL and the assistance was for teachers, rather it was for district leaders which offered guidance in how to spend funds via relationship building and targeted communication.

Tracking Professional Learning

The next recommendation given was to check on the implementation of the JEPL (Croft et al., 2010). Data was to be used to not only guide the focus of PL but also to track the success of the PL offered (Hamre et al., 2017). Sadly, few states or districts evaluated the criteria on resources provided (Little, 1993). Without monitoring and evaluating the PL implemented within school systems how did they know quality JEPL was being utilized as required by federal grant regulations? Another recommendation made to SEAs was to identify successful PL within their own state (Croft et al., 2010). The ultimate goal was to have a successful example of JEPL which was shared out with other schools as well as districts. It was a waste of time and funds to continue the implementation of various models of JEPL that were not effective simply because SEAs were not monitoring and evaluating for effective JEPL that was already implemented.

Along with looking for successful JEPL practices within the state, it was also suggested SEAs talk with universities to include teacher candidates and collaborate efforts to work with JEPL models (Croft et al., 2010). These collaborative works with JEPL supported the initial licensure of those candidates. Some years later, it was suggested PL needed to focus on refining teaching

strategies for teachers to be better prepared entering the teaching field (Hamre et al., 2017). It was also more productive if the SEAs looked at creating individualized PL plans to support the re-licensure of teachers.

Lastly, and probably one of the most important recommendations provided was to make decisions about JEPL based on data collected by comprehensive data systems which required programs to track the impact of JEPL on teachers and students alike (Croft et al., 2010). Hamre et al., understood,

> The best PL happens when leaders use data to determine the areas of need for their program, identify effective approaches to support teachers' practice in these areas, and then work clearly to communicate their vision and expectations to everyone in the program. (p. 7)

Similarly, it was professed, "…professional development is more effective in changing teachers' classroom practice when it has collective participation of teachers…; active learning opportunities…; and coherence..." (Desimone et al., 2002, p. 102).

A prediction made on the increased use of a new practice in the classroom was easily made if the PL provided focused on a specific teaching practice (Desimone et. al, 2002) which supported the thought that teaching was the "learning profession" as teachers were required to expand their knowledge base of their skills, practices, and knowledge about their profession as a whole (Croft et. al, 2010). "Evidence has shown that when children are supported by teachers with specialized techniques who are sensitive to emerging developmental skills, they generally achieve at higher levels" (Landry et al., 2009, p. 448). Teaching

practices needed to promote positive student outcomes had to be the central element of effective PL (Hamre et al., 2017). Thankfully to the reforms created and passed over the last couple of decades PL evolved throughout the years.

The focus on improving outcomes for students has always been at the forefront but what changed was how to accomplish greater student outcomes. PL changed from having a focus on skills to learning more about strategies. PL also focused on how those changes were taught and the definition of PL was turned upside down when coaching was introduced which meant opportunities were provided for teachers to practice new strategies in the classroom with support.

The paradigm shifts from traditional PL that existed only in workshops for a day or two to the more complex idea of on-going JEPL that took place within a classroom was a much-needed shift; however, further studies should continue to track the effectiveness of various JEPL models. The education system continues to be reshaping teacher preparation and is certainly not finished reforming ongoing PL. This search for better JEPL cannot end until student success is possible for all students and the achievement gap is closed. PL and school improvement plans must be embedded in a school culture that all support and thrive in on a continual basis.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to assess Georgia's Pre-K consultants' perspectives on the role of the Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) professional learning (PL) model on prekindergarten teachers' Instructional Support in classrooms.

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative design based on the phenomenological approach, specifically, symbolic interactionism (SI). Prasad (2005, p. 21) wrote, "…the meaning of such objects arises out of the social interactions one has with the larger society" and "…these meanings are not completely predetermined but are constantly being modified through a series of individual interpretations." The study sought out Georgia's Pre-K consultants' perspectives, as trainers, of the MMCI PL model provided to prekindergarten teachers and the effects on teachers' Instructional Support provided in classrooms. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, the study aimed to gather the multivocality of each trainer's assigned meaning to the MMCI PL model.

Limited research exists on the perceptions of trainers for the MMCI PL model. The current qualitative research study looked to extract multiple constructed realities, while studying the phenomenon holistically. It was with

great certainty that if a quantitative research method was used for this research study, the stories of each trainer would have been displaced; therefore, missing not only the personal connection to the work, but also the personal identification of the PL.

Sample Participants for the Study

Participants in the study worked for Bright from the Start as Pre-K Consultants who provided the MMCI PL model. Participants (n = 30) were sent an email seeking volunteers. The consent form was attached to the email to provide detailed information about the purpose of the study, how confidentiality would be kept, and the process to be completed. A second email was sent out to consultants ensuring the first email had been received. Email requests sent out yielded a volunteer rate of 43.33%. Participants (n = 13) who volunteered for the study worked across various parts of Georgia. Participants interviewed included veteran and novice consultants as well as veteran and novice trainers of MMCI.

Participants included two males (15%) and 11 females (85%). Two participants (15%) held a bachelor's degree, seven participants (54%) held a master's degree, and four participants (31%) held a specialist's degree. Years of experience as a Georgia Pre-K consultant ranged from as little as three years up to seventeen years (M = 8.4) and years of experience as a MMCI trainer, ranged from one to eight years (M = 3.86).

Context

Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) consultants are required to attend CLASS Observation certification provided by Teachstone or another

consultant who has been certified as a Train the Trainer. This two-day training prepares consultants to understand which behaviors are indicative of which dimensions of the CLASS instrument and how to score the instrument. When the two-day training is completed consultants are then required to complete reliability testing, within two weeks of the training, which includes watching and scoring five videos along with maintaining an 80% average to the scoring frame. Should consultants not pass the first time, they are provided two other opportunities to pass. Should the third attempt not be made successfully then remediation is provided to the consultant.

A knowledge test is also required consisting of 50 questions on which consultants are to assign behavior markers to specific dimensions. This test must also be passed with an 80% average. Consultants annually take the observation certification test to ensure reliability. To attend the MMCI Instructor Training course, consultants must first be a certified CLASS observer. The MMCI training model is provided by Teachstone over a period of three days. The three-day training deepens the understanding of the CLASS observation tool and teaches consultants the format and content of the MMCI PL program sessions. The participants in the study had received training on how to implement the MMCI PL through their work with DECAL. The first year a certified Pre-K consultant offers MMCI training, Teachstone has the trainer film himself/herself for one session. The video is then sent to Teachstone for a coach to observe and provide feedback to the new trainer. This support ensures reliability of the training model.

DECAL assigns new DECAL MMCI trainers to a partner when they first begin offering the training. Consultants are allowed freedom in how the teachers are selected for the MMCI PL; however, they are asked to steer clear of first year teachers as those teachers need to attend DECAL training for new pre-k teachers. Typically, cohorts of 10 to 20 teachers are selected and trained over a period of five months. Training begins in October/November and continues through February/March. One day each month, consultants meet with their participants and offer training for a full eight-hour day following the Teachstone MMCI PL model. Consultants may see their teachers during the training as they complete required DECAL program visits for the centers in which those teachers work; otherwise, Pre-K teachers are only seen during the training sessions by most consultants. Teachers who have been selected for the MMCI PL are also given a year's subscription to the online resources offered by Teachstone. Those resources include articles, blogs, and videos that support teachers in implementing teaching practices aligned with the CLASS framework.

Limitations

Although interviewing co-workers provided easy access to MMCI trainers and a sense of interconnectedness, it was imperative to stay focused and remain objective rather than allowing biases to interfere with the research. Due to having such strong connections to the PL model and beliefs of CLASS-Pre-K, it was important to be mindful of keeping oneself separated from the research. As interviews began, I set the stage immediately for an interview. Rather than the typical chit chat that usually ensued after greetings with co-workers, I simply

greeted each participant and explained the process for the interview which would be to ask a list of questions and jot notes.

Throughout the interviews I watched for confirmation bias. As I heard statements that I felt may be biased, I confirmed what I heard participants saying and asked if the information was captured correctly or were changes needed making sure I captured the participant's perspective. Taking care to avoid leading questions, the research questions crafted were neutral phasing allowing the participant to respond objectively. Lastly, I kept check of my body language as well as responses to comments to prevent interview bias. I made sure to listen as much as possible and confirm each participants' perspective when jotting notes.

Research Question

To explore the influence of the Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) professional learning (PL) model's effects on teachers' strategies related to the Instructional Support (IS) domain, the study focused primarily on the trainers' perspectives. There is a vast body of empirical studies citing evidence for the use of CLASS and its effects on student growth both socially/emotionally and academically; however, there is little research citing evidence for the use of the CLASS MMCI PL model and its effects on teachers' abilities to improve the IS domain based on consultants' perspectives. The primary question for the study was:

1) Do consultants believe, based on the Pre-K teachers' participation in the MMCI professional learning, that the post-CLASS observation outcomes

demonstrate an adequate amount of growth in the Instructional Support domain?

Procedures

Participants (n =13) who responded to the email with interest were then asked for availabilities to schedule a ZOOM meeting based on their time outside of the workday. Once consent forms were in hand, each participant was interviewed. The interviews were conducted via ZOOM to support the collection of as much data as possible from across the state while at the same time, saving the researcher time and expenses that would accumulate due to travel across the state. The decision to use ZOOM was based on data gathered by researchers Archibald et al. (2019) who noted participants in their study, "commonly described ZOOM technology in positive terms owing to its convenience, ease of use, security, interactivity, unique features (e.g., screen sharing, video record option), and its ability to facilitate personal connections between users" (p. 7). Use of ZOOM was also based on the findings from Deakin and Wakefield (2014) who noted, "Thus, supporting the assertion that the quality of responses gained through online research is much the same as responses produced by more traditional methods" (p. 610). The platform of ZOOM also was chosen knowing each consultant had prior experience with the conferencing software. This platform allowed me to maintain a sense connectivity and the ability to visually see body language. The interviews were allotted an hour and a half; however, on average, each interview lasted about an hour.

Measures

Interviews were conducted at the end of the academic year, in June and July of 2019, using a set of 19 unstructured interview questions (see attachment A). Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated,

> Our model researcher starts analyzing very early in the research process. For him, the option represents an analytic strategy: he needs to analyze as he goes along both to adjust his observation strategies, shifting some emphasis towards those experiences which bear upon the development of his understanding, and generally, to exercise control over his emerging ideas by virtually simultaneous checking or testing of these ideas. (p. 216)

Certifying the development of understanding and the need to analyze as the study progressed, provided good cause for further questions to be asked within interviews and ensured the interviewer had a clear and concise interpretation of the participants' thoughts and feelings.

Analysis

Interviews were held with consultants (n =13) via ZOOM and each interview was recorded. While interviewing the consultants, notes were minimally composed to support the natural rapport between the participant and the interviewer. This connection supports the trust participants have in sharing their raw emotions about the MMCI PL model, its implementation, as well as its effects on teachers. During the interview process, brief case summaries were maintained of each participant to support analysis of data. A transcribing software was used for transcribing interviews. The transcripts were read to ensure

they matched what the interview participants shared during their interview ensuring authenticity of the interview as well maintaining intimacy with the data.

As interviews were held and transcribed, via open coding, the highlighting of common terms used by consultants created the key terms. Through an inductive analysis the text was revisited many times. By way of axial coding, common categories/themes among the codes were identified. Once the data were analyzed individually, the themes that emerged were grouped accordingly and analyzed, holistically, resulting in clusters of data as well as possible sub-clusters noted in Table 1.

Table 1.

Themes and elements emerging from interview data.

Question	Theme	Subthemes
#4	Content	The structure of the content is easy for teachers
		Teachers enjoy the videos sharing content
		The layout of the content
		The structure of the content was predictable
		The structure of the content was regimented
#5	Boredom	Boredom due to lack of engagement
		Boredom of sit and get sessions
		Boredom due to repetitious content
#6	Understanding	Understanding of relationships
		Understanding of teaching strategies already implemented in classes via reflection
		Understanding the need for interactions
#7	Time	Not enough time
		Time of year for the observations
		Time to implement
		Short time frame for a lot of information
#12	Emotional Support	Easy for teachers to relate to the ES domain
		Positive Climate already done by teachers
		Easy for trainers to demonstrate and discuss the ES domain

#13	Instructional Support	Hardest for teachers to relate to the IS domain A lot of information in the IS domain Late time frame teaching IS & the need for more time
#14	Engagement	Boring & use of protocols Few group discussions in comparison to content shared by the trainer Redundancy of format of the training model
#15	Resources	Need for articles to provide participants Need for specific activities for participants to implement in classrooms Need for support to the participants and the implementation of CLASS beyond the training model
#16	Transfer of Knowledge	Seeing transfer via interactions in training Seeing transfer via interactions in classrooms
#18	Awareness of Dimensions	ES domain – making connection of previously implemented behaviors to the ES domain IS domain – need for conversations and open-ended questions
#19	Instructional Support	Concept Development – lack of understanding and need for more time

While analyzing the data as it was collected, analytic memos were made to ensure immersion in the study was maintained. The memos helped to identify links and gaps among the data as well as any questions about the data. The analytic memos also forced a continuous process of looking back at created categories, ensuring new developments or changes in those categories were not overlooked as data was collected. The comparative analysis between the hypotheses and how the collected and analyzed data fit or did not fit was safeguarded by the maintaining of analytic notes. Table 1 below provides an overview of the themes and elements of themes that emerged from the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to assess Georgia's Pre-K consultants' perspectives on the role of the Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) professional learning (PL) model on prekindergarten teachers' Instructional Support (IS) in classrooms. The study sought to answer the research question

"Do consultants believe, based on the MMCI PL model, the post-CLASS observation scores demonstrate an adequate amount of growth in the Instructional Support domain?"

Background on MMCI Professional Learning Expectations

Across Georgia, the MMCI PL was either provided by one or two Pre-K consultants. In most cases the PL was provided by partnering consultants as only 31% delivered the PL model alone. DECAL asked Pre-K consultants to select returning teachers when selecting their participants for the PL and consultants were given freedom to set their own criteria on how those returning teachers were selected. Initially, DECAL required consultants to select teachers who had taught a minimum of three years; however, over time, the years of experience criteria became more relaxed allowing teachers who had only two years of experience to attend MMCI PL. Among participants in the study, 36% continued to use the

criteria of teaching for a minimum of three years when selecting teachers for participation.

In addition to experience parameters for selecting PL participants, consultants also reported that they engaged local Pre-K directors (38%) to select the participants. Pre-K consultants, (14%) also selected teachers based on (1) close proximity to where the consultant lived, (2) the program size, allowing many Pre-K teachers to be trained at once (10%), (3) Pre-K teachers' experience (14%), (4) through volunteer processes (5%), (5) identified teachers and/or programs' (14%) support needs, and by (6) selecting teachers who had been teaching for a lengthy amount of time and who were seeking for PL (5%) opportunities.

Pre-K consultants served dual roles in their engagement with MMCI PL. Consultants were responsible for providing PL to the teachers as well as supporting their teachers via required visits (at least one program visit and at least one site visit) throughout the school year. The implementation of this dual role provided the opportunity for Pre-K consultants to see their teachers not only throughout the PL but also in their classroom, although limited, with the hope of seeing the transfer of knowledge from the MMCI PL. Findings from the participants' interviews follow.

Time

A common theme emerging from participants' interviews was time. Pre-K consultants perceived time as both a strength and an area for improvement. Forty-two percent of consultants identified a strength of the MMCI PL being the

layout and pacing of the curriculum. Because of these two features, the amount of time teachers were required to be out of their classrooms was reduced to a minimum of five days. The original MMCI PL format set by Teachstone had the training implemented over a period of 10 days; whereas, DECAL received approval to provide the training over a period of five days cutting the required amount of time out of the classroom in half.

The amount of time required to cover content was also a concern noted by the Pre-K consultants. Thirty-six percent of consultants perceived more time was needed to review the information based on the volume of content to be shared. With the 36% who reported the volume to be large, more than half perceived the latter training sessions (Days 4 and 5) revealed content that was more substantive and complex than other components covered in the professional learning. Based on the complexity of the content, consultants thought more time was needed to truly do justice on the content and support the participants' understanding. Twenty-nine percent of consultants stated more time was needed to allow for better coverage of the content and 22% perceived that extending the training beyond a year would allow more time to implement strategies and receive feedback via follow-up visits from consultants. For example, one consultant noted,

> For me, the biggest challenge is the continuation of it [MMCI PL]. How do we keep it going? How do we keep what they've [teachers] learned, and how do we ensure that they're keeping it in practice?

Because the final sessions occurred in February and/or March, this resulted in limited opportunities for Pre-K teachers to implement the newly acquired content prior to being observed by the Pre-K consultants. These consultants noted that the last domain of the MMCI PL, IS, could be moved to earlier sessions within the overall training to allow teachers to implement suggested practices and receive feedback.

Regarding time, 7% of consultants noted the Concept Development (CD) dimension of MMCI as the hardest to share with Pre-K teachers and that there was not enough time to truly go in-depth with the material. Consultants suggested that because CD was scheduled for the last day, time was rushed, Pre-K teachers were tired, and teachers were less engaged in the training. There concerns were further noted by 50% of the Pre-K consultants who indicated that the dimension of CD was the most challenging for the Pre-K teacher to understand and integrate into their teaching. One consultant commented,

> Those, [concept development and quality of feedback] are harder because they're harder to understand. I remember last year, concept development, was just over their head based on where we were in the day and where we were in the sessions. I think it is the way we do it. [Consultant name] and I switched this past year and taught it early in the morning when the teachers were fresh. That was helpful. Again, you are still trying to cram really, really important information into a tiny amount of space.

Time was also referenced as an area for improvement for the MMCI PL model. Thirty-six percent of the consultants noted training would be more

impactful if consultants had been granted the time to complete follow-up visits once the training was completed or if the training were extended beyond one year. This suggestion was consistent with Little's (1993, p. 5) belief that when adequate opportunities for practice are being provided along with coaches to provide classroom consultation for teachers as they learn to use new strategies then effective training is taking place.

Relevance

Providing opportunities alone is not enough, professional learning (PL) must also be relevant to the teachers' experiences in the classroom. It was noted by Sappington et al. (2012, p. 3) that PL must be authentic and connected to teacher work. In the current study, 47% of the questions asked in the interviews generated responses on relevance with 56% of those responses noting the lack of relevance as a concern; hence, a disconnect to teacher work.

Twenty-three percent of Pre-K consultants noted relevance as a reason for why a domain or dimension was hardest for them to share in the PL whether it related to content being difficult for teachers to understand or implement. When asked what portions of the MMCI PL was the most challenging to share with participants and why one consultant stated,

> I mean, not to say that it's challenging. I guess the instructional part is more. You have a lot of information. You have a lot of language development, those kind of things in there; so, I think sometimes it's harder for the teachers to see that and you [Pre-K consultant] have to give them lots of examples.

Another consultant replied,

> Instructional Support, it's not natural for folks, it's not as easy to model. I guess, especially, the concept development piece. Language modeling and quality of feedback, I feel like teachers have less of a hard time grasping that one but the concept development piece, that one is probably the hardest to train.

Croft et al., (2010, p. 8) identified the need for relevance as well as active participation in job embedded professional learning (JEPL). Fifteen percent of consultants made comments in reference to relevance and active participation when questioned as to whether or not the MMCI PL model needed improvements. For example, one consultant replied,

> They [Teachstone] don't make any effort to get teacher buy-in. It's just here's some research and this is what I found out. I feel like there needs to be more connections to the teachers, whether it's starting a day off of training with eliciting prior knowledge. I feel like they don't make any effort to do those things or to make connections. I feel like, they don't connect the information in the training model to participants in a way that participants can really connect with. I have to come up with my own hooks and all those things to be able to reel teachers into the topic; whereas I feel like that should be part of this training model. They should have already figured out what is a typical Pre-K teacher experience and how can this improve their teaching. I don't feel they have made any effort to do that, I feel like I do that on my own.

Pre-K consultants (23%) also felt improvement was needed to participant materials based on the lack of relevance or ability to connect to the materials provided. One recommendation given for participant materials was to add articles as the consultant did in her training sessions. She commented,

> Sometimes finding an article that is practical classroom information and not just the Dimensions Guide. Which sometimes, is hard for them [teachers] to really visualize what is being said in that one small paragraph. Whereas a short article, they tend to connect more with and at least they are able to talk more about it which I feel like helps them learn more about CLASS.

Videos being more relevant to the Georgia's Pre-K classrooms was recommended by 15% of the interviewed participants. Cultural differences identified in the videos included in the MMCI PL typically showed urban areas while many of Georgia's Pre-K classes are in more rural areas. Another recommendation was increasing the number of students in the videos as several videos represented a small number of students in the classes (3 to 5) while Georgia's Pre-K classes enroll up to 21 students.

Desimone and Pak (2017) understood active learning on the part of the participant increases the effectiveness of PL. Similarly, a Pre-K consultant noted in her reply to answering what could be done to make the training better for teachers,

> I think if they [teachers] could apply some of the situations to what they are doing in the classroom, then we [Pre-K trainers] could extend on that.

> So maybe applying what they're [teachers] already doing so we could make real-life connections with our teachers.

Making connections is all about relevance and including relevance with participation is one way to construct a productive learning environment. Without relevance and active participation PL failed at the point Showers (1984) most cared about, "…the interaction between the teacher and the students" but in this case, the trainers and the participants.

Engagement

Participants as active learners increases the effectives of PL according to (Desimone & Pak, 2017). The Pre-K consultants interviewed in the current study identified engagement as a challenge within the MMCI PL model. When asked what challenges in the MMCI PL model were, 46% noted the lack of engagement as a challenge. One consultant stated, "The model is so structured, it becomes predictable, routine and perhaps boring or lackluster. I think teachers lose engagement from that structure" while another noted, "…it was just the same old, same old every week, so we had to find ways to keep teachers engaged sometimes", and yet another, "I criticize the way they [Teachstone] created the MMCI model without implementing protocols, it wasn't as engaging. From day one, I implemented protocols. The way it was set up was a sit and get. That isn't productive training for teachers."

The lack of engagement was one reason 7% of the Pre-K consultants felt the training model was difficult to share and 7% noted an increased level of engagement as a needed improvement to the MMCI PL model. The lack of

engagement noted by the Pre-K consultants sadly supports other research on the passive roles that teachers take in PL (Little, 1993).

Fifteen percent of consultants saw the increased level of participation or engagement in the professional learning (PL) as one way to identify growth for the teachers. A consultant responded, "They [teachers] would do table talk basically where they shared with their table what they did" and another Pre-K consultant stated, "When they share excitedly on things they try and encourage each other to try it as well. The confidence in even sharing weaknesses, so to speak, I don't look at them as weaknesses but sharing areas they don't feel they do well in, out loud. To me, that's growth." Desimone (2011) understood the value of self-examination and its relation to powerful learning experiences; fortunately, for these few training participants, due to their engagement in the MMCI PL model they had a powerful learning experience.

Repetition

Repetition was found to be a strength for 31% of the Pre-K trainers as one trainer stated,

> …the structure of it is easy. I mean, it was to me. It was laid out in such a way that it made sense. It was very regimented. Especially the first year I taught it, I felt like I needed to stick to it. Each session, you knew what was going to be expected.

While repetition made the training easy to follow and easy to present it also created concerns with engagement.

Penuel et al. (2007) noted the value of engagement in PL as participants discussed the need for more in-depth engagement. Unfortunately, Pre-K trainers (46%) perceived one challenge of the MMCI PL model was repetition as one stated, "You didn't have to do any planning before that day of training because you could just go and its click, click, click, and it's the exact same thing over and over again. I just think it creates boredom. It's not as interactive as it could be" while another stated, "Well, to be honest, the presentation is a little dry, and it's the same thing over and over again, so it gets a little boring after a while."

Just as repetition was noted as a challenge, it was also noted as an area for improvement by 39% of the trainers. When asked what improvements could be made to the MMCI PL model one trainer stated, "The predictability, the structure is nice; the consistency is nice, but that can get boring. So there needs to be some excitement in the training" and another,

> …they still need improvements because it gets into that pattern. It is predictable, instead of doing a different activity to get that same kind of information across. I'm trying to figure out different activities to do the same thing, to dissect, to figure out indicators, behavior markers, things like that.

Repetition was not just mentioned as a reason for what made the training model a challenge for trainers, but when asked what was found as the hardest to share within the MMCI training 8 % of the interviewees revealed repetition,

> The most frustrating part for me, I don't know if it is the hardest, the part that I don't like is where you have the slide with the domain, the

> dimensions, and you are going through each thing. The one [slide] says to briefly go over it [domain and dimensions] and if you over share in the first part then it feels so redundant to go through each thing and then the example slides are briefing it. It's annoying so my least favorite is, I guess, the part that is supposed to be the content of each session.

Regrettably, repetitious training reflects the opposite of what Hunzicker (2011, p.178) noted as effective PL:

> Effective professional development is collaborative, engaging teachers in both active and interactive learning. Professional development is active when teachers engage physically, cognitively, and emotionally through activities such as problem solving, discussion, simulations, role-play and application. It becomes interactive when teachers share problems, viewpoints and ideas, working together toward solutions.

Videos

Active learning and interactive learning are components of effective PL (Hunzicker, 2011). The videos embedded in the MMCI PL model were noted as a strength (31%) to the PL materials based on their ability to spark interactions among teachers and trainers.

> The strengths of the training model? I think the teachers, for the most part, enjoy the videos. I mean they watch those, and they like to see the videos to kind of validate what they are already doing right. We have a lot of conversation in MMCI, where we talk about things happening in their classroom and relate it back to MMCI, so we have a lot of really good

> conversations. I feel like they enjoy that and just being heard and validated.

Spark of interactions was not the only asset brought about by the videos; they also allowed teachers to see other educators teaching. As one participant noted,

> As far as structure goes, I think the teachers really enjoy looking at videos in other teacher's classrooms. I feel like that is a real strength because they are only in their room, that's all they know, and then all of a sudden, they watch other teacher's teaching and having interactions with kids. I think it gives them some new perspectives. So, I feel like a real strength is them getting exposure to other teacher's classrooms.

Pre-K consultants (62%) noted the videos as a resource for either both the trainer and the participant or the participant alone. Thirty-one percent of the trainers recounted videos as the easiest part to share out of the MMCI PL model with one stating,

> I like those [video portion] because, even though, of course the videos don't change, the discussion related to it is open-ended as far as what the teachers are going to see and then my feedback to what they say. I like it because of the open-ended feedback loops that it provides me the opportunity to do.

Although many Pre-K consultants found the videos as a resource and/or a strength, they (46%) also found the videos in need of improvements for the MMCI PL model as a whole. One trainer expressed the need for improvement,

> My strength may also be my weakness. I mean the structure of it, and certainly having videos. Teachers can see other teachers in action. I think having examples and non-examples or less effective teachers is a strength too, so you can see it.

Later in the interview, this trainer noted,

> Certainly, the videos, every teacher says, 'How come she's only got three students? Where are the other 19?' Even though they are very realistic, perhaps having something that resembles more the classrooms that we really see.

Astoundingly 54% of the trainers noted the videos needed improvement when referring to them as a participant material as one noted,

> If Teachstone could come down one day or come down for a week, send one to South Georgia, send one too metro Atlanta, one to the middle, send three down here, and let them all record videos of different parts of the day and they embed those into the videos. I'm thinking with the videos, culturally, a lot of times, it doesn't even match up because you've got classrooms in New York or a classroom somewhere that's not even close to us.

Cultural relevance ties directly to what Hunzicker (2011, p. 177) believed to be essential to effective professional learning as she stated, "As a group, adult learners approach learning with clear goals in mind, using their life experiences to make sense of new information. They are motivated by opportunities to address problems – and create solutions – that relate directly to their lives."

The participants' critiques revealed constraints within the structure of the Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) professional learning (PL) model and those constraints provided support to their perspectives as to whether the post-CLASS observation scores demonstrated an adequate amount of growth in the Instructional (IS) Support domain. When asked how consultants define growth, the top four definitions provided were (1) implementation of strategies (46%) learned from the PL model, (2) comparison of pre- and post-CLASS scores (31%), (3) a combination of the implementation of new strategies and a comparison between pre-and post-CLASS (15%) scores, and (4) the level of participation (8%) in the PL model. Interestingly, when defining growth only 15% mentioned sustained growth, meaning the new strategies learned were implemented in the classrooms beyond the one year of attending the MMCI PL model.

Sixty-nine percent of the Pre-K consultants perceived the post-CLASS observation scores demonstrated a small to mid-range amount of growth and of that 69%, 46% noted a small amount of growth. One Pre-K consultant noted, "It depends on the teachers as it is kind of a spectrum. I have seen some teachers that have no change. I would say minimal. On average, minimal growth. Some change but minimal", another stated,

> How much growth have I seen? I think it has varied, based on the individual certainly. I think I have been disappointed that I have not seen it in everybody. Even if I see growth, they can perform when somebody is observing but when I go back, I have been disappointed.

Another consultant expressed,

> I don't feel like it's enough for five days' worth of training. We should really see more leaps and teachers really pushing kids' learning and understanding but I don't see that it's there at all. The relationship piece is great, but as far as growth, I feel like it is very small. I remember when all that research was done and they [Department of Early Care & Learning] were like, 'We're going to get rid of all those other models because we can see that there is growth in teachers that participate in MMCI' but I never understood and was always left puzzled because I'm in the classrooms and I'm not seeing it [growth]. So, I beg to differ, I guess.

One potential reason noted by the Pre-K consultants for low scores was the difficulty in facilitating the IS domain. Fifty-four percent of the Pre-K consultants noted a dimension or domain as the hardest component to share with teachers in the MMCI PL with 42.8 % noting the IS domain was the most difficult. The consultants' difficulties in sharing such heavy content that lacked the depth needed for true transfer left the Pre-K consultants feeling this affected the teachers' ability to grasp the new content. Additional time, as noted by the consultants, would have allowed him/her to cover the content in an adequate manner affording the opportunity to share at a deeper level.

The lack of an adequate amount of time to cover such heavy content was not the only potential factor to play a role in low to mid-range growth in the IS domain, 23% of the Pre-K consultants also noted the IS domain was difficult for teachers to grasp due to the challenges in providing sufficient and explicit

examples during the PL model. One Pre-K consultant noted, "…analysis and reasoning, evaluation of concept development, what does that look like? It's not explained very well", while another stated, "Instructional Support, it's not easy to model, especially the Concept Development and Language Modeling, but the Concept Development piece, that one is probably the hardest in training" and yet another, "I guess the Instructional part [Instructional Support domain] is more, you've got to give a lot of information. I guess giving them concrete examples for Language Modeling, Concept Development, and Quality of Feedback. You have to be very specific."

Having a PL model that requires heavy content to be covered but only skimming the service because of limited time coupled with a lack of explicit examples and results that demonstrate minimal to mid-range growth left the Pre-K consultants' feeling the post-CLASS observation scores did not demonstrate adequate growth in the IS domain.

Only 31% felt a significant amount of growth was demonstrated in the IS domain after receiving the MMCI PL model. Fifty percent of that 31%, felt the growth was simply a result of the Emotional Support (ES) and the Classroom Organization (CO) domains already scoring high in the CLASS pre-observation as one mentioned, "Instructional Support overall is where we saw the most growth because a lot of times they already did fairly well in the other domains, but we were kind of like, ah…they got a little bit." Another consultant articulated,

> The last two years, I saw a lot of growth. To be honest, the group I had last year, their scores were already high for their pre [observations] and so they didn't really need to show much more, especially in the Emotional Support and Classroom Organization. They were already [scoring] sixes and sevens. In Instructional Support, many of them were not all that bad either because they were already getting twos and threes, but I did see growth. I saw some fives and I think maybe even one six. The most growth? I guess probably in Instructional Support because if we are talking about the average teacher, typically they do pretty well in Emotional Support and Classroom Organization.

The growth, for many Pre-K consultants, was the result of the first two domains already scoring high leaving room for little growth in the ES and CO domain; therefore, the one domain with lower scores and in need of improvement was the Instructional Support (IS) domain.

The IS domain which is comprised of the following dimensions: Quality of Feedback (QF), Concept Development (CD), and Language Modeling (LM) was identified by 62% of the Pre-K consultants as having made the most growth. LM alone (50%) was noted as the dimension with the most growth, 37.5 % noted growth in a combination of dimensions among QF, CD, and/or LM, and the remaining (12.5%) noted QF as the most growth. When asked why the consultants' felt their teachers grew in those areas, three reasons surfaced: 1) 57% mentioned the ability to ask more opened-questions, have more conversations or a combination of both, 2) 14% identified the ability to repeat and extend statements

and 3) 29% noted simply gaining awareness of the behavior markers in those dimensions were responsible for the growth observed. Growth was noted in the IS domain, but it was not adequate growth as 69% of Pre-K consultants only noted minimal to mid-range growth.

In summary, the Pre-K consultants defined growth by what they observed in the classroom in hopes of seeing a true transfer of what was shared during the MMCI PL, an increase in pre- and post-CLASS scores, and/or participation in the MMCI PL model. Unfortunately, many of the Pre-K consultants' perspectives are that they are only seeing small amounts of growth in teachers across the state of Georgia.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to assess Georgia Pre-K consultants' perspectives from the Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) professional learning (PL) on prekindergarten teachers' Instructional Support (IS) for Pre-K children. The primary question for the study was "Do consultants believe, based on the Pre-K teachers' participation in the MMCI professional learning, that the post-CLASS observation outcomes demonstrate an adequate amount of growth in the Instructional Support Domain?" This study employed a qualitative design based on the phenomenological approach. Participants in the study worked for Bright from the Start as Pre-K Consultants who provided the MMCI PL. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, the study aimed to gather multivocality of each trainer's assigned meaning to the MMCI PL model.

The Pre-K consultants perceived the MMCI PL had many strengths. One such strength was time, with 42% perceiving the layout and the pacing were well done. Pre-K consultants also perceived a strength in repetition, (31%) that supported the structured PL noting the PL was easy for participants to follow and the videos (31%) had the ability to spark interest and interactions among participants and Pre-K consultants. Consultants noted the strengths in the MMCI PL model were what supported growth for teachers in the Emotional Support (ES) domain and the Classroom Organization (CO). When asked what areas of growth

could be seen after the MMCI PL, 46% of the consultants noted either the ES domain, the CO domain, or a combination of the two domains.

The MMCI PL was also cited with weaknesses such as the need for more time to cover the IS content (36%) shared on the last day and a half of the PL. Concept Development (CD) which contained content that was noted as more substantive and complex was cited by 50% of the Pre-K consultants noting this was the hardest dimension for teachers to grasp. The last day, Day 5, again was split in two sessions with Quality of Feedback (QF) covered in the morning session and the after session covered Language Modeling (LM) both of which covered a substantial amount of content. Because the IS domain was being covered in the last day and half of the MMCI PL 46% of Pre-K consultants perceived minimal growth in IS leaving consultants with the perception that this content was not covered adequately.

Information gleaned from the interviews suggested that Pre-K consultants identified one way to observe growth was observing teachers transfer the strategies learned in the MMCI PL model into their classrooms; unfortunately, 46% saw minimal growth. A large percentage of Pre-K consultants (46%) declared a lack of engagement as a weakness in the MMCI PL model while also stating engagement was a much-needed improvement (69%) to the model. Pre-K consultants felt certain with engagement would come a better understanding resulting in a higher percentage of growth in the IS domain.

The data from the participants clearly noted the most difficult content for Pre-K consultants to share and the most difficult content for Pre-K teachers to

grasp in the MMCI PL model all fell within the IS domain. The struggle for both consultants and teachers were due to several factors. The Pre-K consultants' perspectives were that more time, more engagement, relevance, and better examples would lead not only to increasing the Pre-K consultants' ability to share the content, but would also lead to a better understanding for the Pre-K teachers. Unfortunately, the consultants did not believe, based on the Pre-K teachers' participation in the MMCI PL, that the post-CLASS observation outcomes demonstrated an adequate amount of growth in the IS domain as 46% noted minimal growth and only 23% noted mid-range growth.

Transfer of the IS domain was weakest according to the Pre-K consultants as growth remained low. Showers (1982, p.33) stated, "…without coaching of teachers as they attempt to integrate new teaching models into their instructional repertoires, transfer of training will not occur for most teachers." Showers' statement was supported with 54% of the Pre-K consultants in the current study recommending more time and coaching as added components to the MMCI PL. The complexity and amount of IS content led consultants to believe if additional time and coaching in the classroom was added, the MMCI PL would be much more effective resulting in greater growth for the IS domain.

Engagement was another concern for many Pre-K consultants (46%) as they perceived this to be one reason for the low growth in IS. Penuel et al. (2007) noted the need for more in-depth engagement when reforming PL. The Pre-K consultants resoundingly noted the engagement component for the MMCI PL

needed to be reformed including more opportunities to include the teachers in the PL in a manner that required more engagement.

Not only was engagement imperative to effective PL but according to Pianta (2011) he noted the need to go beyond gaining knowledge about effective interactions and he claimed the training participants would need a high degree of specificity in identifying effective interactions. Twenty-three percent of Pre-K consultants' comments supported Pianta's conclusions because they perceived the MMCI PL lacked sufficient and explicit examples for the IS domain which in turn resulted in low growth for the domain.

One area the Pre-K consultants felt MMCI PL laid out well were components for ES and CO. Reyes et al. (2012) asserted a high classroom emotional climate (CEC) was required for students to be more engaged in their learning and she defined CEC as an environment where students' perspectives were considered, positive interactions encouraged, and providing the space for learning to take place and the confidence to do so. Reyes et al. definition of CEC mirrors both the ES and CO domains of CLASS and 46% of Pre-K consultants observed growth either in the ES domain, the CO domain, or a combination of the two domains after the MMCI PL.

Although 46% of Pre-K consultants observed growth in the ES and CO domain, 54% felt like the most growth was seen in the IS domain; however, each Pre-K consultant, at some point in the interview, mentioned the reason for IS showing the "most" growth was due to participants already having mid to high range scores in ES and CO. The results from this study resemble the Vartulie et.

al study (2014) as it reported significant shifts in the IS domain between fall and spring scores. The difference in the two studies, Pre-K consultants' perspectives differed as they perceived the ES and CO domains already scored fairly high in the fall leaving little room for growth in the spring and the IS domain scored low in the fall leaving plenty of room for growth. This data left pause for consideration of how the pre- and post-CLASS domain scores are viewed and compared to one another when considering which domain reflected the most growth given the typical patterns of growth that the consultants observe on CLASS scores.

Study Limitations

One limitation to this study was the close connection of the author to the study participants. By being employed by Bright from the Start at the time of the study, I was not able to interview Pre-K teachers or use their data from the pre- and post-CLASS assessments. Not being able to use a mixed methods approach limited the generalizability of the study.

It is also important to note the existing relationship between the interviewed Pre-K consultants and the researcher as it is impossible to separate oneself from co-workers who have implemented the same PL over the years. All precautions were taken to eliminate confirmation bias, leading questions, and interview bias. Based on the familiarity with Pre-K consultants, I approached the interviews from more of a conversational perspective to put the participants at ease and in hopes of making them feel comfortable in sharing their true feelings about the MMCI PL model.

Implications for Future Research

Results of this study might be helpful in supporting discussions among Georgia's Pre-K consultants and the program's management to better serve the Pre-K teachers of Georgia.

Using findings from this study might also support continued PL through job-embedded approaches to support making such learning more interactive for participants, which in turn, should support transfer of the learned content into the Pre-K teachers' classrooms.

At the time of the interviews, Teachstone had just released an updated version of the MMCI PL model. Suggestions for future research include researching the Pre-K consultants' perspectives on the amount of growth witnessed after Pre-K teachers attend the new MMCI PL; further, a recommendation to research sustained growth might provide data to support long-term benefits of the MMCI PL model.

This study may propel more interest in researching the perspectives of PL consultants who serve dual roles such as a coach as well as a trainer. Future research should also include investigations about the effects of a PL consultant, who serves dual roles, on teachers' transfer of knowledge into their classrooms.

References

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Clinical Practice Commission. (2018). A pivot toward clinical practice, its lexicon, and the renewal of educator preparation. Washington, DC: Author.

Archibald, M.M, Ambagtsheer, R.C, Mavournenn, G.C., & Lawless, M. (2019). Using zoom videoconferencing for qualitative data collection: Perceptions and experiences of researchers and participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 18,* 1-8. doi.org/10.1177/1609406919874596

Brown, C.P., & Weber, N.B. (2016). Struggling to overcome the state's prescription for practice: A study of a sample of early educators' professional development and action research projects in a high-stakes teaching context. *Journal of Teacher Education, 67*(3), 183-202. doi.org/10.1177/0022487116636452

Buyse, E., Verschueren, K., Doumen, S., Van Damme, J., & Maes, F. (2008). Classroom problem behavior and teacher-child relationships in kindergarten: The moderating role of classroom climate. *Journal of School Psychology, 46,* 367-391. doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2007.06.009

Croft, A., Coggshall, J.G, Dolan, M., Powers, E., & Killion, J. (2010, April) Job-embedded professional development: What it is, who is responsible, and how to get it done well. National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, *Issue Brief*

Casbergue, R.M., Bedford, A.W., & Burstein, K. (2014). CLASS reliability training as professional development for preschool teachers. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 28*(4), 426-440. doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2014.944724

Deakin, H., & Wakefield, K. (2014). SKYPE interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research, 14*, 1–14. doi.org/10.1177/1468794113488126

Decker, D.M., Dona, D.P., & Christenson, S.L. (2007). Behaviorally at-risk African American students: The importance of student-teacher relationships for student outcomes. *Journal of School Psychology, 45,* 83-109. doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2006.09.004

Denton, C.A. & Hasbrouck, H. (2009). A description of instructional coaching and its relationship to consultation. *Journal of Educational Psychological Consultation*, *19*(2), 150 – 175. doi.org/10.1080/10474410802463296

Desimone, L.M., Porter, A.C., Garet, M.S., Yoon, K.S., & Birman, B.F. (2002, Summer). Effects of professional development on teachers' instruction: Results from a three-year longitudinal study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*(2), 81-112. doi.org/10.3102/01623737024002081

Desimone, L.M. (2011, March). A primer on effective professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *92*(6), 68-71. doi.org/10.1177/003172171109200616

Desimone, L.M. & Pak, K. (2017). Instructional coaching as high-quality professional development. *Theory Into Practice*, *56*(1), 3-12. doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1241947

Downer, J.T., López, M.L., Grimm, K.J., Hamagami, A., Pianta, R.C., & Howes, C. (2012). Observations of teacher-child interactions in classrooms serving Latinos and dual language learners: Applicability of the classroom assessment scoring system in diverse settings. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *27*, 21-32. doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.07.005

Early, D.M., Maxwell, K.L., Ponder, B.D., & Pan, Y. (2017). Improving teacher-child interactions: A randomized controlled trial on Making the Most of Classroom Interactions and My Teaching Partner professional development models. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *38*, 57-70. doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.08.005

ESSA (2015). Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015– 2016).

Fitzgerlad, M.M. & Theilheimer, R. (2013). Moving toward teamwork through professional development activities. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *41*, 103-113. doi.org/10.1007/s10643-012-0515-z

Flower, A., McKenna, J.W., & Haring, C.D. (2016). Behavior and classroom management: Are teacher preparation programs really preparing our teachers? *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 61(2), 163-169. doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2016.1231109

Fowler, R.C. (2017). Reframing the debate about the relationship between learning and development: An effort to resolve dilemmas and reestablish dialogue in a fractured field. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 45,155-162.* doi.org/10.1007/s10643-015-0770-x

García, E., & Weiss, E. (2019). Challenging work environments ("school climates") especially in high poverty schools, play a role in the teacher shortage. *The Fourth Report in "The Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market" Series*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Garet, M.S., Porter, A.C., Desimone, L., Birman, B.F., & Yoon, K.S. (2001, Winter). What makes professional development effective: Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, *38*(4), 915 – 945. doi.org/10.3102/00028312038004915

Goldhaber, D. (2019). Evidence-based teacher preparation: Policy context and what we know. *Journal of Teacher Education, 70*(2), 90-101. doi.org/10.1177/0022487118800712

Guernsey, L., & Ochshorn, S. (2011, November). Watching teachers work using observation tools to promote effective teaching in the early years and early grades. New American Foundation: New American Foundation. 28 pp. www.Newamerica.net

Hafen, C.A., Hamre, B.K., Allen, J.P., Bell, C.A., Gitomer, D.H., & Pianta, R.C. (2014). Teaching through interactions in secondary school classrooms: Revisiting the factor structure and practical application of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System-Secondary. *Journal of Early Adolescence,* 1-30. doi.org/10.1177/0272431614537117

Hamre, B. K., Partee, A., & Mulcahy, C. (2017, Oct-Dec). Enhancing the impact of professional development in the context of preschool expansion. *Aera Open, 3(4),* 1-16. doi.org/10.1177/2332858417733686

Head Start Policy & Regulations. (n.d.). Retrieved April, 2018, from Head Start|ECLKC website http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov

Hirn, R.G., Hollo, A., & Scott, T.M. (2018). Exploring instructional differences and school performance in high-poverty elementary schools *Preventing School Failure, 62*(1), 37- 48. doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2017.1329197

Hoglund, W.L.G, Klingle, K.E., & Hosan, N.E. (2015). Classroom risks and resources: Teacher burnout, classroom quality and children's adjustment in high needs elementary schools. *Journal of Psychology*, *53*, 337-357. doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2015.06.002

Howes, C., Hamilton, C.E., & Matheson, C.C. (1994). Children's relationships with peers: Differential associations with aspects of the teacher-child relationship. *Child Development, 65,* 253-263. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1994.tb00748.x

Hu, B.Y., Fan, X., Gu, C., & Yang, N. (2016). Applicability of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System in Chinese preschools based on psychometric evidence. *Early Education and Development, 27*(5), 714-734. doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2016.1113069

Hughes, J.N. & Kwok, O. (2006). Classroom engagement mediates the effect of teacher student support on elementary students' peer acceptance: A prospective analysis. *Journal of School Psychology, 43,* 465-480. doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2005.10.001

Hunzicker, J. (2011) Effective professional development for teachers: a checklist. Professional Development in Education, 37:2, 177-179. doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2010.523955

Isenberg, E., Max, J., Gleason, P., Johnson, M., Deutsch, J., & Hansen, M. (2016). *Do Low- Income Students Have Equal Access to Effective Teachers? Evidence from 26 Districts* (NCEE 2017-4007). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Kane, B.D. & Rosenquist, B. (2018, April). Making the most of instructional coaches. *Phi Delta Kappan, 99*(7), 21 – 25. doi.org/10.1177/0031721718767855

Kim, Y.A, An, S., Bell, D., Jean-Sigur, R., & Basch, M. (2018). Views of teacher candidates on their preparedness and motivation to teach pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. Early Years, doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2018.1471451

Landry, S.H., Anthony, J.L., Swank, P.R., & Monseque-Bailey, P. (2009). Effectiveness of comprehensive professional development for teachers of at-risk preschoolers. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 101*(2), 448-465. doi.org/10.1037/a0013842

La Paro, K.M., Pianta, R.C., & Stuhlman, M. (2004, May). The classroom assessment scoring system: Findings from the prekindergarten year. *The Elementary School Journal, 104*(5), 409-426. www.jstor.org/stable/3202821

Lieberman, A. (2000, May/June). Networks as learning communities: Shaping the future of teacher development. *Journal of Teacher Education, 51*(3), 221-227. doi.org/10.1177/0022487100051003010

Liew, J., Chen, Q., & Hughes, N. (2010). Child effortful control, teacher-student relationships, and achievement in academically at-risk children: Additive and interactive effects. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25*, 51-64. doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2009.07.005

Lisonbee, J. Payne, A.L., Mize, J. & Granger, D.A. (2008, November/December). Children's cortisol and the quality of teacher-child relationships in child care. *Child Development 79*(6), 1818-1832. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01228.x

Little, J.W. (1993) *Teachers' Professional Development in a Climate of Reform*. Columbia Univ., New York, NY.: Teachers Coll. National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching.

Logan, J.A.R., Piasta, S.B., Justice, L.M., Schatschneider, C., & Petrill, S. (2011). Children's attendance rates and quality of teacher-child interactions in at-risk preschool classrooms: Contribution to children's expressive language growth. *Child Youth Care Forum 40*, 457-477. doi.org/10.1007/s10566-011-9142-x

Manning, M., Wong, G.T.W., Fleming, C.M., & Garvis, S. (2019). Is teacher qualification associated with the quality of the early childhood education and care environment? A meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research, 89*(3), 370-415. doi.org/10.3102/0034654319837540

Mantzicopoulos, P., & Neuharth-Pritchett, S. (2003). Development and validation of a measure to assess Head Start children s appraisals of teacher support. *Journal of School Psychology, 41*, 431-451. doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2003.08.002

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2016). *Designing Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Mashburn, A.J., Meyer, J.P., Allen, J.P., & Pianta, R.C. (2014). The effect of observation length and presentation order on the reliability and validity of an observational measure of teaching quality. *Educational and Psychology Measurement, 74*(3), 400-422. doi.org/10.1177/0013164413515882

Matsumura, L.C., Garnier, H.E., & Pascal, J. (2002). Measuring instructional quality in accountability systems: Classroom assignment quality and student achievement. Los Angeles: University of California, National Center for Research in Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).

Mccormick, M.P., Turbeville, A.R., Barnes, S.P., & McClowry, S.G. (2014). Challenging temperament, teacher-child relationships, and behavior problems in urban low-income children: A longitudinal examination. *Early Education and Development, 25*(8), 1198-1218. doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2014.915676

McGuinn, P. (2016). From No Child Left behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act: Federalism and the Education Legacy of the Obama Administration, *Publius: The Journal of Federalism 46*(3), 392-415. doi.org/10.1093/publius/pjw014

Mead, S. & Carey, K. (2011). Beyond bachelor's: The case for charter colleges of teacher education. Brookings-Rockefeller Project on State and Metropolitan Innovation. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. 2010. *The road less traveled. How the developmental sciences can prepare educators to improve student achievement: Policy recommendations*. Washington, DC: Author.

Neuenschwander, R., Friedman-Krauss, A., Raver, C., & Blair, C. (2017). Teacher stress predicts child executive function: Moderation by school poverty. *Early Education and Development, 28*(7), 880-900. doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2017.1287993

Pakarinen, E., Lerkkanen, M.K., Poikkeus, A.M., Rasku-Puttonen, H., Eskelä-Haapanen, S., Siekkinen, M., & Nurmi, J.E. (2017). Associations among teacher-child interactions, teacher curriculum emphases, and reading skills in grade 1. *Early Education and Development.* doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2017.1289768

Penuel, W.R., Fishman, B.J., Yamaguchi, R. & Gallagher, L.P. (2007, Dec). What makes professional development effective? Strategies that foster curriculum implementation. *American Educational Research Journal, 44*(4), 921-958. doi.org/10.3102/0002831207308221

Pianta, R.C. (1997). Adult-child relationship processes and early schooling. *Early Education & Development, 8*(1), 11-26. doi.org/10.1207/s15566935eed0801_2

Pianta, R.C., La Paro, K.M., & Hamre, B.K. (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual: Pre-K.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing.

Pianta, R.C. & Hamre, B.K. (2009). Conceptualization, measurement, and improvement of classroom processes: Standardized observation can leverage capacity. *Educational Researcher, 38*(2), 109-119. doi.org/10.3102/0013189X09332374

Pianta, R.C. (2011). *Teaching children well.* Washington, DC: Center for American Progress

Portilla, X.A., Adler, N.E., Boyce, W.T., Ballard, P.J., & Obradović, J. (2014). An integrative view of school functioning: Transactions between self-regulation, school engagement, and teacher-child relationship quality. *Child Development,* 1-17. doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12259

Prasad, P. (2005). *Crafting Qualitative Research: Working in the Postpositivist Traditions.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Reyes, M.R., Brackett, M.A., Rivers, S.E., White, M., & Salovey, P. (2012). Classroom emotional climate, student engagement, and academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(3), 700-712. doi.org/10.1037/a0027268

Rhodes, H., & Huston, A. (2012). Building the workforce our youngest children deserve. *SRCD Social Policy Report, 26*(1), 1-32.

Sabol, T.J., Soliday Hong, S.L., Pianta, R.C., & Burchinal, M.R. (2013, August). Can rating pre-k programs predict children's learning? *Science*, *341,* 845-846. DOI: 10.1126/science.1233517

Sandilos, L.E., Shervey, S.W., DiPerna, J.C., Lei, P., & Cheng, W. (2017). Structural validity of CLASS K-3 in primary grades: Testing alternative models. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *32*(2), 226-239. doi.org/10.1037/spq0000155

Sappington, N., Pacha, J., Baker, P., & Gardner, D. (2012, Spring). The organized contradictions of professional development and school improvement. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, *7*(1).

Schachter, R.E. (2015). An analytic study of the professional development research in early childhood education. *Early Education and Development, 26*(8), 1057-1085. doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2015.1009335

Showers, B. (1982). *Transfer of Training: The Contribution of Coaching*. Eugene, Ore.: Center for Educational Policy and Management.

Showers, B. (1984). *Peer Coaching: A Strategy for Facilitating Transfer of Training.* Eugene, Ore.: Center for Educational Policy and Management

Showers, B. & Joyce, B. (1996). The evolution of peer coaching. *Improving Professional Practice*, *53*(6), 12–16.

Slavin, R.E. (2017). Evidence-based reform in education. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk, 22*(3), 178-184. doi-org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/10.1080/10824669.2017.1334560

Stuhlman, M.W. & Pianta, R.C. (2009). Profiles of educational quality in first grade. *The Elementary School Journal, 109*(4), 323-342. http://dx.doi.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/10.1086/593936

Suchodoletz, A., Fäsche, A., Gunzenhauser, C., & Hamre, B.K. (2014). A typical morning in preschool: Observations of teacher-child interactions in German preschools. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *29*(4), 509-519. doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.05.010

Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S.*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Swank, P.R., Taylor, R.D., Brady, M.P., & Freiberg, H.J. (1989, Winter). Sensitivity of classroom observation systems: Measuring teacher effectiveness. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 57*(2), 171-186. doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1989.10806504

Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S., & Higgins'D'Alessandro, A. (2013, April). A review of school climate research. *Review of Educational Research,* 1-29. doi.org/10.3102/0034654313483907

Vartuli, S., Bolz, C., & Wilson, C. (2014). A learning combination: Coaching with CLASS and the Project Approach. *Early Childhood Research & Practice, 16*(1), 1-13.

Vu, J.A., Jeon, H., & Howes, C. (2008). Formal education, credential, or both: Early childhood program and classroom practices. *Early Education and Development, 19*(3), 479-504. doi.org/10.1080/10409280802065379

Whitebook, M., & Ryan, S. (2011). Degrees in context: Asking the right questions about preparing skilled and effective teachers of young children. *Preschool Policy Brief, 22,* 1-16.

Zepeda, S.J., Parylo, O., & Ilgan, A. (2013). Teacher peer coaching in American and Turkish schools. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education, 2*(1), p. 64-78. www.emeraldinsight.com/2046-6854.htm

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. How many years have you provided MMCI training?
2. How many teachers have received MMCI training from you?
3. Who selects the teachers for you to train? How are they selected?
4. What would you identify as the strengths in the MMCI training model?
5. What would you identify as the challenges in the MMCI training model?
6. What do you believe could be the disadvantages for participants in receiving the MMCI training?
7. What do you believe could be the disadvantages for participants in receiving the MMCI training?
8. What resources are provided to you as a trainer?
9. What type of training did you receive to prep you as a trainer of MMCI?
10. What type of resources are provide to you as a trainer of MMCI?
11. What type of resources are provided to participants of MMCI?
12. What portions of the MMCI training do you consider the easiest for you to share and why?
13. What portions of the MMCI training do you consider the hardest to share and why?
14. Does the MMCI training model need improvements and if so why?

15. What improvements would you recommend based on your response to question 11?
16. How would you identify growth for your teachers based on the MMCI training?
17. If you see growth in your teachers, how much do you see?
18. What areas of MMCI do you see the most growth in when observing your teachers?
19. What areas of MMCI do you see the most challenging for participants and why do you think?